

VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

STARTING BABY JAZ

*A Young Horse's Journey
from Halter to Saddle*

CHARLES WILHELM
WITH ADRIENNE N. TANGE

STARTING BABY JAZZ

*A Young Horse's Journey
from Halter to Saddle*

CHARLES WILHELM
WITH ADRIENNE N. TANGE

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Copyright © 2006 by Charles Wilhelm. All rights reserved.

Howell Book House

Published by Wiley Publishing, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning or otherwise, except as permitted under Sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, (978) 750-8400, fax (978) 646-8600, or on the web at www.copyright.com. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Legal Department, Wiley Publishing, Inc., 10475 Crosspoint Blvd., Indianapolis, IN 46256, (317) 572-3447, fax (317) 572-4355, or online at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

Wiley, the Wiley Publishing logo, Howell Book House, and related trademarks are trademarks or registered trademarks of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. and/or its affiliates. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Wiley Publishing, Inc. is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

The publisher and the authors make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this work and specifically disclaim all warranties, including without limitation warranties of fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales or promotional materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for every situation. This work is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional services. If professional assistance is required, the services of a competent professional person should be sought. Neither the publisher nor the authors shall be liable for damages arising here from. The fact that an organization or Website is referred to in this work as a citation and/or a potential source of further information does not mean that the authors or the publisher endorses the information the organization or Website may provide or recommendations it may make. Further, readers should be aware that Internet Websites listed in this work may have changed or disappeared between when this work was written and when it is read.

For general information on our other products and services or to obtain technical support please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at (800) 762-2974, outside the U.S. at (317) 572-3993 or fax (317) 572-4002.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic books. For more information about Wiley products, please visit our Website at www.wiley.com.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Wilhelm, Charles, 1945–

Starting baby Jaz : a young horse's journey from halter to saddle /

Charles Wilhelm with Adrienne N. Tange.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7645-9630-8 (cloth)

ISBN-10: 0-7645-9630-6 (cloth)

1. Horses—Training. 2. Horsemanship. I. Tange, Adrienne N. II. Title.

SF287.W46 2006

636.1'0835—dc22

2006008781

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Cover design by José Almaguer

Book production by Wiley Indianapolis Composition Services

This book, and everything I have been able to accomplish in this life, is because of my God, my family, friends, staff, and clients. I have been truly blessed with the support I get from all of you.

My love and gratitude goes out to my wife, Anne, who gave up a very successful career and has been more than supportive; my son, Jeff; my daughter-in-law, Severine; and my grandson, Vincent. I love you all very much and thank God for your place in my life.

To Karen Werth, my ranch manager. Thank you for managing the photos in this book. In addition, I appreciate your ability to multitask—no matter what is thrown your way, you always rise to the challenge. There are not words for all that you do for us.

To all the wonderful horses who have been with me and have made me the trainer I am today, especially Tennison Bey.

To the rest of my staff, apprentices, friends, and the dedicated and faithful clients of whom there are so many I can't name them all. I would not be here today without you; you make this work and my life so rewarding. I cannot imagine it being any other way. Thank you all.

Contents

Acknowledgments	viii
Introduction	
Starting a Young Horse	1
Why Get a Young Horse?	1
You Are a Horse Trainer!	2
Ultimate Training	3
Overview	
Ultimate Foundation Training	5
Working with Pressure	8
So, What Is Ultimate Foundation Training?	11
Natural Horsemanship	12
Training Equipment	14
General Safety and Training Guidelines	18
Training Month 1	
Charles Meets Jaz	21
Selecting the Right Horse	24
First Training Exercise: Haltering	29
Leading	34
Hoof Handling	36
Grooming	41
Training Month 2	
Earning Jaz's Respect and Teaching Her to Tie	45
Beginning Line Work	49
Landings	54
Tying	55
Training Month 3	
Preparing Jaz for Saddle Work and the Vet	61
Concentrated Circles	67
Moving the Hip Over	71
Desensitizing Your Baby to Touch	73
Handling Her Ears and Mouth	73
Working Under the Tail	77
Preparing for Shots	78

Training Month 4**Asking for More, and Jaz's First Bath 81**

Looking for Clear Improvements 83

First Bath 85

Training Month 5**Jaz and Charles Take a Break 91**

Clipper Training 92

Food Aggression 96

Training Month 6, Part 1**De-Spooking: Jaz Overcomes Her Fears 101**

Working with a Tarp 102

Introducing a Plastic Bag 106

Working with the Tarp on a Line 111

Sacking Out with a Tarp 115

Last Step: Leave the Draped Tarp on and Move Her Forward 119

Getting Creative with De-Spooking 120

Training Month 6, Part 2**Jaz Wears a Saddle and Bridle 121**

Getting a Saddle That Fits 121

Preparing for Saddling 122

The Rope Cinch Exercise 123

Sacking Out with a Saddle Blanket 124

Working with a Surcingle 126

Desensitizing Your Horse to a Saddle 129

Jaz Wears Her First Saddle 131

Bridling 132

Yielding to the Bit Exercises on the Ground 138

The Hip Exercise with a Rope 140

More Rope Exercises 141

Training Month 7, Part 1**Jaz in the Round Pen 145**

Back to the Round Pen 145

Round Pen Logic 146

Considerations for Round Penning 149

Jaz Working Well in the Round Pen 150

Round Pen Rules 153

Round Penning, Step 1: Get Your Horse Moving Consistently 154

Round Penning, Step 2: Ask for a Change of Direction 156

Inside Turn 156

Outside Turn 160

The Benefits of Round Penning 162

Training Month 7, Part 2

Successful First Rides with Jaz 165

Is Your Horse Ready to Ride?	165
Emotional Aspect	166
Mental Aspect	166
Physical Aspect	167
Assessing Jaz's Readiness for Riding	169
First Rides	170
Step 1: Buy Safety Equipment for Those First Rides	170
Step 2: Don't Be in a Hurry to Get On	170
Step 3: Start with Mounting Exercises	171
Step 4: Get Movement from the Saddle	173
First Rides on Jaz	175

Training Month 8

Jaz Learns to Trailer Load 181

Why a Trailer Seems Scary to a Horse	182
The Four Parts of Trailer Loading	183
Trailer-Loading Exercises	184
Step 1: Do Change-of-Direction Exercises	185
Step 2: Use the Go-Forward Cue to Load the Horse	189
Step 3: Use the Back-Up Cue to Unload the Horse	194

Training Month 9

Jaz Goes Bridle-Less 197

Jaz in Sacramento	197
Crossing Objects Demonstration	199
Working at Home with Jaz	201
Jaz Learns Shoulder Control	202
Stopping with Pre-Cues	203
Going Bridle-Less	205
Colt Starting at the Ranch	207
Teaching Your Horse to Guide	227
Controlling the Hips	227
Gaining Shoulder Control	231

Training Month 10

The Mental Side of Horsemanship 241

Recognize Your Abilities	242
Train Yourself to Be Focused	242
Block Out External Distractions	242
Block Out Internal Distractions	243
Be Clear in Your Intentions	243
Remain Focused on Training Goals	244
Work with Your Fear	244
Learn to Accommodate the Horse	245
Set Realistic Goals	245

Conclusion**Looking Back: You've Come a Long Way, Baby** **247**

The Early Months	248
The Middle Months	250
The Later Months	251
First Rides and Beyond	252
A Word on Hoof Care	253
Good-Bye for Now	254

Appendix A**Selecting and Caring for a Young Horse** **257**

Finding a Reputable Breeder	257
<i>by Charles Wilhelm</i>	
National Organization Web Sites for Breed/Color Registries	260
National Organization Web Sites by Discipline	262
Other Educational Web Sites	262
Pre-Purchase Exam Tips for the Young Horse	263
<i>by Carrie Schlacter, V.M.D.</i>	
When to Do a Pre-Purchase Exam	264
Where to Do the Pre-Purchase Exam	264
What's Involved in the Pre-Purchase Exam	264
Preventive Health Care for the Young Horse	269
<i>by Kristin R. Dietrich, D.V.M.</i>	
Nutrition for the Young Horse	273
<i>by Stephen Duren, Ph.D.</i>	
What's in Feed?	274
Utilizing Feed: The Digestive System	277
Lessons Learned from the Digestive System	277
Feed Choices	278
Feeding the Young Horse: The Ground Rules	280
Creep Feeding: Preparation for Weaning	282
Example of Diets	283
Developmental Orthopedic Disease	286
Optimal Condition Through Nutrition	288

Appendix B**References** **291**

About Jaz Ranch	291
The History of Jaz Ranch	292
Breeding Program	295
About Charles Wilhelm Training Ranch	297
Training Programs	297
Horsemanship Education	299
Apprenticeship Program	299
Clinics and Events	301

Index **303**

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the exceptional contributions of the owners of Jaz Ranch, Brent Jensen and Gail Zscheile. This ranch represents skilled dedication and determination to propagate the best of the breed. Knowledgeable and high-quality breeding programs such as this help assure that the finest traits of the breed continue to be passed along to future generations. Sincere thanks for partnering with us to make available this amazing young horse. Having such a willing, good-minded horse made this project especially rewarding.

I would also like to thank the extraordinary veterinarians who contributed their areas of expertise to this book: Dr. Stephen Duren, Dr. Carrie Schlacter, and Dr. Kristin R. Dietrich. I am sure that every horse owner knows how invaluable a knowledgeable vet is, and we are very fortunate to be working with several who also represent the “best of breed” in equine health and wellness.

As always, a huge thanks to the superhero staff of Wiley/Howell books: Roxane Cerda, Christina Stambaugh, Lynn Northrup, Meagan Burger, and Cindy Kitchel. This could not and would not have gotten done without you. Thanks to you all for being top performers in equestrian publishing!

Finally, I am grateful to Adrienne Tange, who assisted me during the creation of this book. Adrienne is a client of mine who, two years ago, bought an unbroken 6-year-old Arabian mare, named Valerie. I tried to talk her into buying a finished horse, but Adrienne really liked this horse. She took me out on an evaluation of the horse, and when I worked with the mare I noticed that her emotional level came up but then came down quickly, which was a good sign. I don’t know what happened, but when we got that horse here her emotional level was higher than when we first worked with her. My foundation training program, combined with Adrienne’s dutiful efforts to learn and work with her horse weekly, has really paid off. People who see Valerie now can’t believe she is the same horse—she is now relaxed and very willing to do just about anything. Adrienne takes her to local shows and has been on long trail rides where Valerie has had to wade through creeks with water up to her belly! Adrienne’s writing background, together with her easygoing personality, has made writing this book a fun experience. I appreciate her stepping up to the plate and helping with this book, because at the time I was at a crossroads. I am also thankful for her ability to take my words, change them into proper English, and then put them on paper; without her, this book would not have been written.

Introduction

Starting a Young Horse

The term “starting a horse” can mean very different things. It can mean beginning to do simple groundwork, such as leading, with a 2- or 3-month-old baby; or it can mean preparing a 2- or 3-year-old horse for more physically and mentally demanding work, such as riding, driving, or packing.

I believe starting a horse should begin early. A horse should be started as soon as the owner or caretaker has any need to be handling the young horse. In practical terms this could mean you are starting a weanling through a 2- or 3-year-old. In my own training practice, starting a horse is the comprehensive process of getting a young horse mentally, emotionally, and physically ready to be a lifetime working partner. And unless the horse will be raised on pasture, largely wild for the first year(s), your training work can and should start as soon as possible.

Since young horses are immature physically, mentally, and emotionally, it is critical to do the training slowly. Anything and everything I want to teach a young horse must be broken into small, simple building blocks. By being methodical, patient, and consistent, over time these tiny blocks become an incredibly solid foundation for a horse who is well mannered, attentive, and responsive.

So try to set aside the common mind-set that starting a young horse is the 30-/60-/90-/120-day period with a professional trainer. Of course it can be, but ideally there should be much more to it, and much of it, perhaps even all of it, you can do yourself!

WHY GET A YOUNG HORSE?

Every year tens of thousands of horse owners breed for or buy young horses. Weanlings, yearlings, 2- to 5-year-olds, there are a lot of young horses out there. We buy them young for various reasons, and probably one of the biggest reasons some folks get a baby horse is because they are really cute!

I can definitely appreciate that fact, and plenty of my clients have gotten a baby for what I call the “aaaw” factor. Although I am positive it’s not a good reason to get a young horse, I am also realistic enough to know it’s a common reason.

People also like the idea of starting fresh with a horse—a horse who has not yet developed problems. With a young horse, they can train correctly from the beginning.

People also buy youngsters because they are usually less expensive than older, trained horses. It is a means by which we can buy into a quality horse more readily. That makes a degree of sense; after all, it takes time and money to get horses under saddle and put miles on them. In some cases it can be much less money up front. However, you must be careful and do the math. Most of the time, especially if you board a horse, it will take less money in the long run to buy an older, well-trained horse than to raise your own.

Some folks buy or adopt foals for rescue purposes, from auctions, closing ranches, or feedlots, such as Pregnant Mare Urine (PMU) or mustang babies. This is certainly a noble endeavor, though it is often much tougher than many anticipate.

And sometimes we buy a young horse because we want to choose, raise, and then train a horse all on our own. There’s nothing wrong with this. The idea of raising your own horse from when she is a baby, teaching her everything on your own, is a wonderful dream and one I want to help you make a reality.

YOU ARE A HORSE TRAINER!

Whatever your reason may be, if you are thinking of getting a young horse or have already gotten one, I want you to consider yourself to be that horse’s trainer; and to do most or all of the foundation training yourself.

Now, getting a baby and training it is a huge responsibility. Quite frankly, when a client asks me if they should purchase and train one I usually say no. Why? Because not everyone is qualified to take on this type of project, only those with enough experience or horse sense. This means that you are confident and do not react to behaviors that can happen during training sessions, such as biting, kicking, or rearing.

This book is for those of you I couldn’t convince otherwise and want to purchase a baby anyway. If you go this route, plan on taking a year or more (depending on the age and the horse herself) to put an ultimate foundation on your baby horse. If you do, when the time comes to ride her, not only should she be fairly easy to start under saddle, she will also be primed for anything you want to do later with her. But if you get in over your head, get professional help.

No matter what discipline you want to prepare your horse for, this foundation training program will apply. Whether you are a novice, an intermediate, or an advanced horseperson, you can be a horse trainer.

Of course, someone experienced, who has a good sense of horsemanship, timing, and feel, is likely to have faster success in bringing the horse along with some or all of the training exercises. But with patience, perseverance, and consistency, the novice will also arrive at that same finish line when all is said and done. So don't be afraid to try, and don't give up!

If you are new to horses or have not done a lot of training on your own, I suggest (and, yes, I know it's annoying when an author does this) that you read my primer book first: *Building Your Dream Horse*. The reason for this suggestion is that I spent a lot of time discussing how horses communicate, act, and react—in essence, how they get trained—and how the characteristics of their personalities make different training applications more or less effective. You really need to understand conditioned response and the fundamentals of pressure and release, herd dynamics, and much more to most effectively follow the training exercises in this book. Especially since we are working with babies here, who will be relying on us 100 percent to give them clear signals and communicate in a way they can understand, you need some foundation yourself in horsemanship. I will cover the basics in this book, but I really hate to repeat too much of what has already been covered in great detail in *Building Your Dream Horse*.

That said, the purpose and format of this book is very straightforward. Over the next several months, I will be training a yearling horse who I have gotten from a top breeder. She has barely been handled to date, and I will begin with the very basics of trying to halter her, up through her first sixty days or so under saddle. Each chapter will contain one month of training activities that I do with my filly, slowly building on exercises done the month before, and following what I consider to be an ideal progression of foundation training for a youngster. This is a horse I intend to keep and make my primary working partner for clinics, expositions, and pleasure riding, so I want to do the best job I can of training her—just as you want to do with your own young horse!

ULTIMATE TRAINING

Imagine someone saying to me, “Charles, could you outline what you think is the ultimate training program to start my colt or filly—and so that I can do the work myself?”

Well, that's what we will be doing with this book over the next year. I will work with my yearling filly in the manner that I recommend everyone do who

has the time and interest. Additionally, I am committed to doing this in a way that really applies to most horse owners. So while I am a full-time horse trainer and could work my young horse five days a week, bringing her along relatively fast, that is not what is going to happen. I am going to be doing this in a manner that I believe many horse owners can follow. Most of you have full-time jobs and families. Horses are a love and a passion, but you likely do not have as much time as you ideally would wish for. The majority of my clients can only work two or three days tops with their horses every week, so that is the pattern the training in this book will follow. In addition, working your horse no more than two or three days per week is better physically for your growing baby. Again, my goal is a successful training program that you can duplicate.

In each chapter I will share the steps I took to train Jaz over the course of the month (and why), tell you how to do the foundation training exercises, and review any problems that may have come up during the training work. So it is intended to be a training diary of a sort, one that tells the story of how to start a young horse in an optimal manner. I have structured it so that you should be able to mimic the exercises and progress with your own horse(s) as you follow along. That is the primary objective of this book: that you learn enough to successfully start your own colt or filly, to raise it to be the horse of your dreams.

After you finish reading about this year of training work I will be doing with Jaz, combined with the practical approach of my Ultimate Foundation Training™ program, I am confident that it will be possible for you alone (or with help, if needed) to do all these same training exercises with your own young horse—and to succeed beyond your wildest dreams!

Overview

Ultimate Foundation Training

I believe that every competent horse professional today is an advocate for foundation training. They may or may not use the word “foundation” in their own program, but anyone doing quality horse-training work appreciates how critical it is that every horse has a solid foundation. I think the differences come in the actual application, the approach, and the expectations for how strong the foundation should be for one trainer versus another. But despite these differences, any good trainer incorporates foundation training into their work.

Foundation training is both a principle and a methodology. As a principle, it addresses the three key aspects of the horse: the physical, mental, and emotional aspects, incorporating them into a set of lessons and a training approach that literally builds a foundation that becomes the basis for the horse’s performance and behavior, no matter what the discipline is. Foundation training recognizes the natural instincts and condition of the horse. Horses are prey animals with deeply embedded fear and flight instincts. They are also social animals, recognizing and responding well to pecking order and herd dynamics. Horses are fairly lazy animals, and as I explained in my book *Building Your Dream Horse*, they are born with distinct personality types. These personality types determine the natural pecking order within a herd, and they should affect how you interact with your horse in becoming her leader. As a principle, foundation training seeks to communicate with the horse in a way she fundamentally understands by accounting for these natural aspects of the horse.

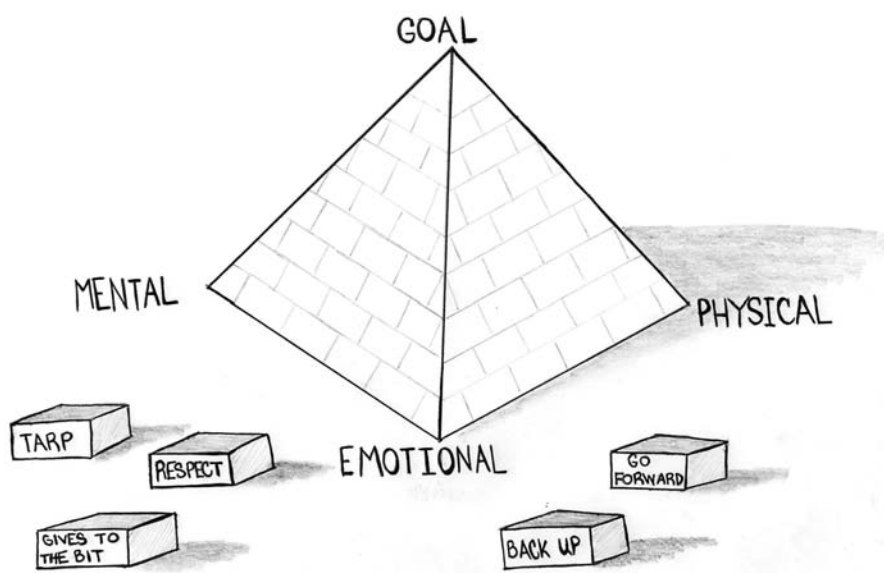
As a methodology, foundation training is a step-by-step set of instructions in which we seek to teach a horse to respond to the requests we make (cues), in her own language. We break the lessons into such basic elements that she understands each request. Over time, the instructions build upon one another to create a complex architecture that then supports anything you want to do with her.

I like to use the analogy of a pyramid when talking about foundation training. A pyramid is sound, stable, and long lasting. Its stability is achieved

through the careful placement of each stone, building upon the strength of each layer that has been placed before. The best horse training is done by carefully applying foundation stones in the correct order and ensuring that each “block” is set well before moving on to the next one. And like the three sides of the pyramid, foundation training builds on the three aspects: physical (where and how the horse moves), mental (what the horse is thinking), and emotional (the horse's fear level).

For example, we can usually manage to gain some physical control of our horse—until something causes her emotional level to shoot through the roof. The horse's fear can so distract her that we lose the physical control we thought we had. I often see people before a ride lunging their horse in the same direction, making her run in a circle for a long time without stopping or changing direction, thinking the horse won't run away or spook on the trail if she does this because she will be too tired. But all the physical exercise does not make a significant impact on the horse's emotional level because her emotions are interfering with her ability to respond to you. The horse can still get excited and be out of control.

Even if the horse's emotional level is not interfering, the horse cannot give her best performance until we control her mind—until we get her thinking about what we are asking her to do. Most horses, including highly trained ones, are not performing to their best ability because their minds are not engaged.



A pyramid is sound, stable, and long lasting.

Foundation training is the way to bring down the horse's emotional level and capture her mind to achieve the physical performance we are looking for. With a comprehensive foundation, a horse and a rider can specialize in whatever discipline they choose, achieving maximum performance. You cannot have a complete foundation on your horse unless training occurs for the horse physically, mentally, and emotionally.

The importance of training horses in incremental steps so they really “get” what you are asking (and thus can be rewarded for good behavior) cannot be overstated. And as important as it is for any horse, it is even more so for young horses. Hopefully after reading this book, you will agree that your success will lie largely in your ability to teach your young horse her lessons in small steps that she understands. In tandem with this is to understand that to create a solid foundation on your horse you must never go on to the next lesson until you are successful in the current exercise.

Foundation training requires us to be patient, persistent, and consistent. Let me tell you, those are all incredibly hard things to be even on the best of days. Your young horse is likely to be none of these things! Instead, you will find yourself tested again and again, trying to master concepts such as pressure and release, timing and feel . . . even just gracefully handling training equipment may be tough to learn at first. You will have days in which you make different levels of improvement with your horse. Some days you may see very little improvement and other days you may see that it all comes together for your horse and you achieve significant training milestones. These experiences are all part of learning to be a horse trainer and cannot be accomplished by only reading books, or watching clinics and videos. To learn to train your own horse, you have three tasks:

1. *Acquire the knowledge of how, what, when, and why to train your horse.*
That's where reading and watching helps. You can always filter what you read or see for what makes the most sense to you, or even just feels right. But the more you open your mind to absorb new information about horses and horsemanship training, the more you are setting yourself up to succeed.
2. *Execute the knowledge into a training plan and follow through.* Set training goals for yourself and your horse. Come up with a specific plan of what you want to accomplish—and then make it happen. You will need to practice your training skills and are likely to need to practice a lot. Yes, you are bound to make mistakes. So what? We all do. It's an integral part of the learning process. As long as you follow the

rules of safety so you and your horse do not get hurt, other mistakes can be fixed later. But you have to get out there to do it yourself and you have to keep at it. Don't give up.

3. *Keep an open mind and keep learning.* Never let your skills become static, always work on refinement, and recognize there are always ways to get improvement. The peers I respect most in my field are like me in that they feel we can constantly learn something new about horses. There are a lot of good teachers out there, both equine and human. So always try to keep learning new skills and techniques.

So foundation training is the methodical step-by-step process of teaching your horse to respond consistently to your cues and standards before going on to the next exercise. And because we are working with young horses, we will break each step down even more. Your ability to break training goals into a series of small steps will make you successful. The term “standards” refers to your expectations for the horse's response to a cue. When you first start your horse with a new exercise, you will have (and should have) a much lower standard, or expectation, for how she will respond. And initially you will need to be watching quite carefully to recognize and reward “baby tries.”

That's really where feel comes into play: having a feel for when the horse is *trying*, even when there are not very obvious signs; then having the timing to immediately reward for that infinitesimal attempt to do what we ask. Recognizing and rewarding those attempts is what really speeds horse training along, especially with young horses. But make no mistake, those attempts can be very hard to see, and this is where an experienced horseperson really has an edge over a novice. No worries though—you can and will get the job done. The more time you spend with your horse asking her to do something, the more you will come to recognize when she is trying to comply.

WORKING WITH PRESSURE

Over time, as the horse progresses in her training and understands more what you are asking, you will need to raise your standards for what you expect. This is accomplished through focusing conditioned response training on those three primary aspects: the physical, the mental, and the emotional. Conditioned response means repetition and lots of it. Since we are working with babies who have super-short attention spans, repetition may be in the hundreds or thousands, and could mean days, weeks, or even months. Whatever the time line, though, it is the effective use of a horse's natural aversion to pressure (their

flight instinct, which is the emotional aspect) to release the pressure at just the right moment, by which you reward them over and over until they are 100 percent consistent in their response. To fine-tune the work, you will need to know your horse's natural emotional level, her mind, and her willingness to learn because these things determine how and when to apply (and release) pressure the most effectively.

So to build our pyramid, we employ the key elements in foundation training: working with pressure, incremental training, setting and raising standards, and repetition.

What is pressure? Pressure is anything a horse wants to avoid. What that means in practical terms can really vary among horses. Horse trainers may add pressure by tapping a horse on the rump with a dressage stick or a horseman's cane, pulling on a horse's bit, applying their leg to a horse's side, using their spurs on a horse's belly, or swinging a rope at their horse. But pressure can also be just the sight of a tarp, a deer jumping out of a bush, their owner spraying fly spray on them, or a flag snapping in the wind. Pressure can be anything that the horse finds scary or uncomfortable, and it tends to raise her emotional level and make her want to flee.

Horses learn to perform behaviors that consistently result in the release of pressure. So when we intend to teach them something, the key is to release the pressure immediately when they perform the behavior we want. The timing is critical. You must release the pressure within a second after the horse performs the desired behavior or it's too late. The problem for many novices is that it is quite easy to release the pressure at the wrong time and inadvertently train the horse to do a behavior we did not intend.

Since pressure and release are the most important practical tools you will use, you need to keep reminding yourself that you reward by releasing the pressure when she is doing what you want, and never to release until she does, until it becomes a real habit and way of thinking in everything you do with her. Let me mention two common examples that are especially applicable to working with young horses.

When teaching a horse to lead, it often happens that she wants to stand still or resist when you are asking her to go forward. The horse is usually not being belligerent so much as she is resisting the pressure; she does not yet understand to yield to it in order to make it go away. I frequently see people pulling and pulling on the horse, the horse resisting, and then the person loosens up on the lead rope for whatever reason while the horse is pulling away. Voilà, the horse has just learned that if she resists long or hard enough, the pressure will stop. Instead, you want to maintain the contact on the lead rope (no need to pull; just match the pressure the horse is exerting) until the horse

takes even a tiny step, and then immediately release. But no matter what else (unless safety is at stake), you do not release the pressure until you get a positive action, a “try” from the horse.

There are always things you can do to help get that try. As in this situation with leading, I recommend that people start by stepping off with their horse at a 45- or 90-degree angle and adding pressure. This technique gets the horse off center and causes her to move forward rather than stiffen up. If you try to move the horse straight ahead, the horse can lock up all her joints and resist. It's much easier to get her to take a step sideways that you can then reward. Step sideways, release, step sideways, release . . . over and over, and soon the horse understands that a step will get the pressure off, and better yet, if she stays with you when walking there will be no pressure at all (since you will be walking with slack in your lead line).

The other very common exercise during which people release when they do not mean to is teaching a horse to bathe, or accept water. The key is to start slow with the water away from the horse, but fundamentally, you keep the water going until the horse quiets for a second, and then you turn it off as the reward for standing still. But human nature being what it is, until you have been doing this a while it is very hard to resist the seemingly automatic compulsion to take the water away when your horse starts backing up. It just happens for many people, and of course, your horse quickly learns that if she backs away from the water, it will go away. Instead, you have to get yourself in the mind-set to keep that water going and watch for that tiny give or second of quiet to reward. It is hard—I am here to tell you, it is very hard. It comes back to making sure we are communicating in their language, not ours. It's so easy to fall into the mode of thinking, “It scares her, so I better back off,” when instead you need to hold and maintain until you get something to reward. A horse neither understands nor appreciates the idea of human kindness, your desire to spare her from a few moments of being uncomfortable. She does understand, “If I stand still, she will make it stop.” So it can be very hard to overcome the automatic mode we can go into to release the pressure when the horse reacts negatively. But once you can get past that, you will be using a method that works 100 percent of the time and is something that can be learned by horse lovers of any level or interest. Knowledge, practice, knowledge, and more practice.

Even when you are doing well, releasing the pressure at the right moment, you still need to be teaching in small steps, one behavior at a time. So for the example of leading again: first one step sidewise, then two steps sideways. Then several steps, then following you in a circle, then in the other direction; next thing you know, you are leading your horse straight forward (which is all you wanted to do in the first place). But since “doing what you want” usually does

not happen right away, incremental training will become near and dear to your heart.

Setting and raising standards is another important element in foundation training. This goes hand-in-hand with incremental training steps. While you need to consistently reward for the try, you also need to set higher standards and expectations as the training progresses (“progresses” is the key word here). Once the horse is solid taking that first step, move on to having her take two steps before you release the pressure, then three, and so on. Always train with clear standards in your mind, and always set higher standards when your horse has mastered the current lesson. When you have established what the standard should be, you must consistently work to that level and then move on to the next step. Too many people become comfortable with their horse’s performance and stop the progression. No matter how good your horse is, try for a better performance. It’s good for you both.

Clearly, foundation development takes time and repetition. This is one of the reasons I advocate starting foundation training with every young horse. You do not need to rush them (and should not), but by the time they are ready to ride, they will already have a solid foundation even if you have worked with them just a couple of times a week.

SO, WHAT IS ULTIMATE FOUNDATION TRAINING?

Ultimate Foundation Training is my name for the collective set of foundation training exercises that we do at my ranch with every single horse. I call it “ultimate” because it applies to every breed of horse and discipline and because the same program is used for starting colts, reschooling problem horses, and enhancing the performance of competitive horses. No matter what the training goal is, every horse goes through these same exercises. The exercises blend elements of traditional, classical, and natural horsemanship. We always start the program on the ground, progressing to the saddle only when every building block of the foundation is solid.

First, we get physical control by asking the horse to move forward to a cue, and then to move in a circle around us. We need the horse to respond consistently to our cues. If the horse’s emotional level goes up, we continue these same basic exercises until the horse turns her attention to us and lowers her emotional level. Once the horse responds consistently, we move on to exercises that ask the horse to move her hips in the direction we ask, disengaging the hindquarters. This gives us the stop. When hip yielding is consistent, we ask for backing. When backing is consistent, we ask for bending and softening of the jaw and neck while performing these basic tasks. As our exercises become more

sophisticated, we start to engage the horse's mind and she becomes an increasingly willing partner.

A proper foundation results in an emotionally sound, supple, and mentally alert horse who thinks about what we ask of her. It also develops the horse physically. With repetition of the circling exercises, the horse begins stepping under herself with the hind legs. This develops her hindquarters, but it also encourages the horse to use her hindquarters to move out (engage). As we progress through the exercises, the horse becomes supple through the jaw, the neck, and the shoulders. This allows the horse to elevate, which in turn allows the horse to use the hindquarters more. All riding disciplines require this kind of physical movement for optimal performance.

Ultimate Foundation Training also develops the horse mentally and emotionally. As the exercises become more demanding, the horse gives us her full attention. When she is thinking about what we are asking, she can't focus her attention outward on distractions that can raise her emotional level. Only after we have control can she perform to her best ability, and when our horse is performing to her best ability, we can achieve our goals.

Good or bad, everything you do with your horse is teaching her something. Ultimate Foundation Training is about building a complete set of skills on your horse so you are always teaching her positive lessons that result in a horse who is respectful, good-mannered, compliant, and attentive. You have unlimited opportunities to reward good behavior and correct the unwanted. Do not let any of those opportunities pass you by.

My Ultimate Foundation Training program provides a blueprint with easy-to-follow steps to make your dream of training your own horse a reality. It's a simple system that anyone can follow. But simple does not mean easy; horse training, as mentioned, is hard work and requires patience, perseverance, and consistency. But the program itself is simple to understand. Follow the steps and document your progress as you go along. I think you are going to be very pleased at how well you can do training your own horse.

Before we actually get started on the training exercises and diaries, I want to wrap up this section on Ultimate Foundation Training discussing three topics: natural horsemanship, training equipment, and general safety and training guidelines.

NATURAL HORSEMANSHIP

"Natural horsemanship" continues to be a greatly overused (if not abused) and often misunderstood term in the world of equestrian marketing. Some people use it to connote the positive; others find it a huge negative. The problem is, people use the term to mean very different things.

Since I am often referred to as a natural horsemanship trainer, I think it's important to explain how I use the term and what I think it means. It's really a very simple idea. Natural horsemanship is not a discipline or a riding style. It can apply to *any* discipline or training program, and it's definitely not a "Western thing," as many people believe. Natural horsemanship has been around for hundreds of years. It means simply that we try to communicate with the horse in her language, not ours. A natural horseman appreciates the need to perceive the horse as she behaves instinctually; to recognize and understand what motivates her, and to use those natural motivations and common language to achieve a behavior through conditioned response.

Those following the principles of natural horsemanship are aware that the horse is a herd animal. They understand and use those natural behaviors to train the horse. With all herd animals, there is a pecking order. Horses use pressure and release to motivate other horses to establish their place in the herd. This hierarchy is established in a herd through some type of confrontation. Horses usually move away from pressure if given the chance.

In natural horsemanship, we use another part of herd dynamics, controlling the horse's space. We can establish rank and ask the horse to go right, left, back, or forward through control of her space. Natural horsemanship is being able to control the horse through herd dynamics, meaning controlling her space.

Natural horsemanship has nothing to do with specific equipment. These days it is common to use a 12-foot line and a string halter and that may give the appearance of being a natural horseman, but without the principles, they become just another training device. You can be a natural horseman and use a web halter and any length of lead line if you are using the natural horsemanship principles. It is what we do with the equipment and how we use timing and feel.

Another principle of natural horsemanship is always giving the horse a way out. There has to be an exit door, otherwise, the horse feels trapped and confined, resulting in an emotional blow up that can lead to bucking, rearing, or bolting. A horse can go any of six directions: up, down, forward, back, left, or right. As natural horsemanship trainers, our job is to make the way out the direction we want the horse to go, and to make that directional choice as easy as possible for her. If we stay consistent and release when she finds that open door, she thinks it is her idea. The more we get her to think, the more we can work with the horse.

Natural horsemanship is simply understanding horses and using that knowledge to motivate them in a language they understand to create a willing partner. These basic principles, along with the correct timing and feel and the consistent use of pressure and release, are what make a natural horseman. It's

not a bad thing, nor a special or unique thing only a few trainers can do. It's just a good overall approach to make horse training effective. As I say, it's been around for hundreds of years and only recently has it taken on the appearance of flashing neon in the desert. Ignore the hype but embrace the principles. They work!

TRAINING EQUIPMENT

I am always hesitant about making lists of which training equipment people need. The truth is, there are many different tools one can use to get the same job done. Many clinicians push using their own equipment, but often the differences are negligible. I even present a lecture and demonstration titled "No Magic Gadgets: The Role of Equipment in Horse Training." The thing is, *you* train the horse, the equipment does not. The magic is in your hands, your timing, and your feel. All you really need is any training equipment that helps you effectively apply pressure and release it quickly. But depending on your own style, that could mean many different things. For example, when working on a basic go-forward cue, some people may use a dressage stick, a lunge whip, or a rope as a form of pressure that the horse moves off. If the horse moves off the form of pressure you have chosen, the training equipment works. You have to figure out with your own horse what is the most effective equipment. The trick with pressure is always to use as much as you need to get the response and nothing more than that. So with a horse who is very emotional, a lunge whip may be too much pressure. It could be that a slight twirl of a rope gets the response you need. Before buying anything new, take a look at what you have available. Chances are you may not need new tools. There will be plenty of opportunities to spend money on your horse, so there's no sense in buying equipment you really do not need. However, there are a few universal pieces of equipment that just make good sense to have when training a young horse.

The first is a rope halter, sometimes called a cowboy halter. Because they are narrower at the critical points of contact (the poll and the nose) than a web halter, they actually put more pressure on a young horse than a web halter does. In most cases you will graduate out of a rope halter over time, as the horse learns to yield to less and less pressure (become lighter), but in the beginning, a rope halter is a great way to have the horse feel distinct pressure points that you can release when she responds as you ask. Many companies make terrific rope halters, so while you could buy one of mine (see appendix B, "References,"



The rope or "cowboy" halter.

to contact the ranch), you don't have to. What is important is that you get one made of quality materials that will stand up to the hard life it's going to have helping to train a young horse, and that it fits properly. While rope halters are more adjustable than web halters, weanlings and yearlings of various breeds have very different-shaped heads, and it is critical that the halter fits properly to apply the pressure as needed. You also do not want to use a rope that is so thin or harsh that it can hurt the horse. Pressure does not equal pain!

The next pieces of must-have equipment are lead lines or working ropes. I recommend around a 12-foot one for basic leading work and concentrated circles. It's also a good idea to have a 20- to 30-foot line once you start line work with your horse. Again, there are lots of good choices out there; just select one that is very durable and of a good weight for regular handling.

In my opinion those are the only things you really must have. However, that's not to say there are not a lot of very cool pieces of training equipment out there you could also buy if you really feel the need to shop. I have started to use certain items heavily over the last few years, such as the tie ring. I discovered that a horseman's cane with a curved end is terrific for working with young horses to get them to pick up their feet (while allowing me to be out of the kick zone). Then in general I use long lunge whips for extended line work, and a short dressage stick for close-in work. I also use objects such as tarps, plastic bags, balls, strollers, bikes, and balloons for regular emotional control work. These are all sources of pressure that become a reward for a positive response when they are taken away.



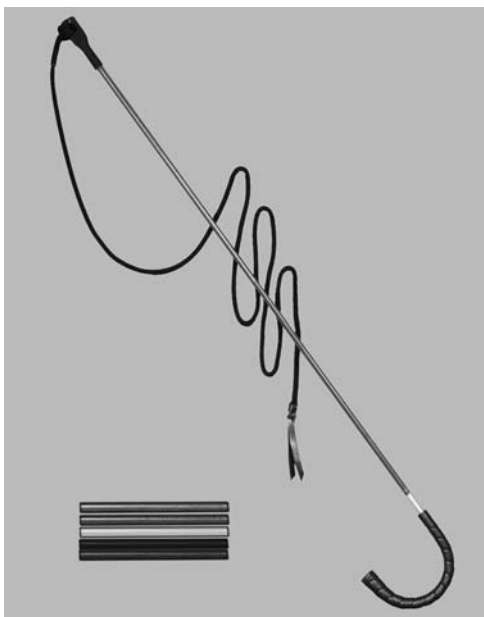
A 12-foot lead line.



A 25-foot lunge line.



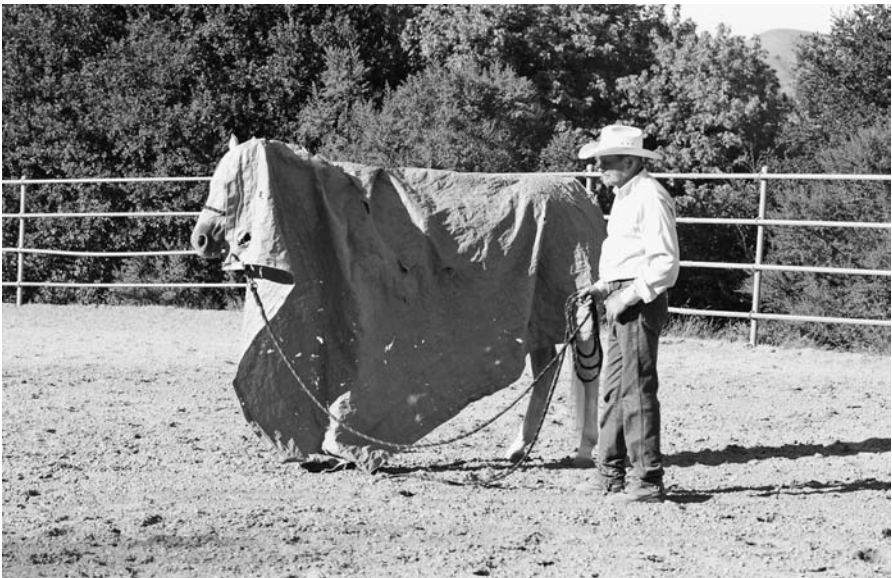
The tie ring.



Horseman's cane with curved handle for hoof handling.

But before you purchase any new training equipment, consider these issues:

- *What feels comfortable to you?* The hardest thing to do is to juggle all the equipment while training a horse. It feels very awkward at first. I have good riders at my training ranch all the time who start doing groundwork training with me and get really frustrated trying to hold their hands in a certain position, keep a rope at the right tautness, manage a lunge whip with the other hand, and change over hands when there is a change-of-direction exercise. They feel like total klutzes at first. Handling the equipment takes a lot of practice. Once you learn it, you can't believe you ever had trouble with it. But when you are just getting started, it helps to use equipment that feels the most natural and comfortable to you.
- *Do you have good equipment?* While this need not mean expensive, it should mean excellent quality in terms of being durable and reliable. Anything put on your horse should be crafted so that it is comfortable for the horse. You do not want to have equipment that applies pressure on its own. This can seriously degrade your training efforts. The horse will never get the full release as a reward if the equipment is pinching or rubbing or just plain uncomfortable.



My favorite emotional control tool—the tarp!

So what equipment do you need for horse training? To determine this, you will need to assess your own skills, your horse's emotional level, and her level of training. How does she react to a lunge whip versus a shorter stick? Does a swinging rope get her going, or can you just raise your hand in the air and she's moving off? Does she lead quietly under halter or pull away? My golden rule is: Always use as much pressure as you need to get the results you want and nothing more than that. Buy only what you need now; you can always add equipment later.

GENERAL SAFETY AND TRAINING GUIDELINES

I cannot stress enough that in everything you do with your young horse, the first consideration must always be safety. Never, ever conduct an exercise that puts either you or your horse in danger. Although young horses are amazingly cute, whether weanling, yearling, or 2 years old, their lack of experience and training makes them highly unpredictable and volatile. Always be ready for them to do the unexpected. Nor should you be surprised to find phases in which they will be increasingly aggressive or mischievous as they seek to test you and to become more independent. Even a small horse is quite capable of hurting you, and herself. Make sure that physical safety and good sensibilities dictate every lesson and interaction. Even teaching horses more “dangerous” lessons such as de-spooking, which raises their emotional level, can be made safer by working in very small steps toward the end goal.

Always have specific goals for each training session. Don't just go out and start doing exercises without thinking about what you want to accomplish. Especially with young horses, you need to keep your training sessions very short and focused. Their immature minds and bodies need to be respected. Don't hesitate to go back to a prior lesson when you hit roadblocks, and as I have said, do not proceed until you are consistent at the current exercise. For physical and mental exercises, such as round penning or longing, which work in a circle, keep sessions fairly short (fifteen to twenty minutes) when the horse is under 2 years old, and make sure you do a lot of directional changes and stops to help balance the stress on the body and the mind.

Always feel good about going back to the basics. If your horse is not learning an exercise, chances are your own methods are not quite there yet. Rather than giving up, step back and revisit some exercises the horse does know.

Remember that everything you do with your horse is a training opportunity. Leading, washing, clipping, tying, grooming—they all give you numerous chances to consistently reward your horse for positive behavior and apply pressure to eliminate unwanted behavior.

Ensure that the horse is becoming calmer as the session progresses. This means the horse has learned some of what you have been teaching. If a horse is confused, she is not calm. When do you know the right time to end the training session? It's time to stop when you see that either the horse is calm and showing progress, or you are no longer calm and your frustration is impacting the training.

Finally, *it's all about respect*. Make sure your young horse always respects your space. Make sure your young horse respects *you*! So many folks get cute little baby horses and before you know it, that horse is walking all over them, dragging them around, and eventually the horse is eight hundred pounds, still doing it, and someone gets hurt.

Watch a mother horse, or any mixed-herd dynamics. The alpha horses are constantly making the young horses respect their space by moving them away. They use directional control to establish leadership and respect. You have got to do that as well. Your horse should never walk into your space—never. If you want to groom and pet the horse, you go to her; she does not get to “demand”



Controlling a young horse's space and movement is the fundamental building block for your foundation training program.



It's great to "love on" your horse, but always do it on your terms, not hers.

it from you. It may seem cute now that she wants to rub against you, lean on you, and nibble or lick at your hand. It won't be cute for very long. That may seem like love and affection to us, but horses work off respect. Your horse needs to respect you if you want her to bond to you. That means you need to set the limits.

I am not saying that you should not "love on" your horse. Go to it! But do it on your terms, not hers. You set the rules, and the most important rule is that she never invades your space. So many other good things in your relationship will flow from that simple rule. You control her space and feet, you get her attention, compliance, and yes, her love.

It's probably worse in many ways to be too timid with your horse rather than too assertive. There is a balance, and that balance is the amount of pressure that gets her to respond. In any case, *you* need to become a form of pressure for your horse. Your horse needs to learn to implicitly respect you. Once this happens, you will be amazed at the change in your relationship and how well the training will go. Speaking of which, let's get started.

Training Month 1

Charles Meets Jaz

It's early October, and my new filly, Jaz Poco Salsa, has finally arrived at the ranch! Her barn name will be Jaz, and I am very excited to have her here and to get started on this project.

Up until the last few days (which includes the trailer trip from Oregon to the San Francisco Bay Area of California), Jaz has been living pretty naturally for a young horse in this day and age; roaming with a large herd of horses on about 300 acres. She had remained with her dam (and was weaned by the mare herself), and has barely been handled by people her entire life. Currently around 14 months old, she has had no training whatsoever—which is of course exactly what I wanted for this project.

The transporter arrived at seven last night, and despite never having been trailered before, and also being without other horses around for the first time ever, Jaz looked to be in good condition. When they arrive at my ranch, some babies have never worn a halter or been led, so to prepare for this I remove a panel from the paddock where they will be staying and tell the driver to back right into the opening of the paddock. Once six babies who had been herded into a trailer and had never worn halters arrived, and I unloaded them the same way into a paddock. The day a baby arrives and unloads from a trailer to a new home is definitely not the time to start a haltering or leading lesson. However, to my surprise, Jaz unloaded calmly with a halter on and was led out. She was not halter broke, but she was willing to give to pressure, though just barely, and did not appear to be stressed. She was attentive and watchful to her surroundings, but her overall demeanor was quiet. Sometimes babies can seem calm when they are really in a bit of mild shock, so I planned to watch her closely.



Meet my new filly, Jaz Poco Salsa. This photo was taken when Jaz was just 3 months old.

The driver led the horse from the trailer into the paddock, where I gave her some hay. I chose a paddock that has a shelter but is out in the open, so she will not feel too confined. After being on 300 acres, immediate confinement to a stall can be stressful in itself. Although I did choose an outdoor paddock, I selected one that was small enough to catch her more easily for halter-breaking once we began training. It's fine to think of putting a completely unhandled youngster in a pasture, but in most cases you'll be trying to catch her for days, if not weeks. Additionally, I selected a 12-by-24 paddock, which allowed her to view and touch other horses nose to nose, which often alleviates separation anxiety. I did not want to put other horses in with her in case they wanted to establish a pecking order, adding more traumas. I also wanted to quarantine her for five days, which prevents the possible spread of disease. You should always separate new horses.



Jaz arrives late in the evening after a long first trailer trip. She exits the trailer quietly as soon as the driver makes contact on her lead rope.

Relocations can be very dramatic for any horse, but especially for youngsters. It's critical that you really allow the horse the opportunity to relax and settle into new surroundings. Sights, smells, sounds . . . it's all new, usually terrifying, and for a horse who's been on 300 acres and formerly been able to flee a fearful situation but is now confined . . . well, that's a huge adjustment. Many times they need rest—and lots of it. The nervous energy from the trailer trip and separation from their herd is typically exhausting. And while Jaz was acting like she had done it all a hundred times before, I still left her alone; just the same as I would have if she had arrived wild-eyed and in a lather of sweat.

Her initial calmness certainly seemed to justify the good reputation of her breeders. Jaz is a National Foundation Quarter Horse, from Jaz Ranch in Oregon (see appendix B, "References," for more about Jaz Ranch). All of their horses are Poco Bueno bred and they breed specifically for the classic Foundation attributes: Brains, Bone, Beauty, Disposition, Trainability, and Versatility. They have earned a reputation for breeding truly amazing all-around working horses, which is exactly what I wanted for myself.



Checking out her new stall and paddock, she can see horses on three sides of where she is.

SELECTING THE RIGHT HORSE

For this project, I wanted to take the time to really chronicle how I believe a young horse should be started from day one, and to do everything right by my standards and beliefs. This meant also including the process of properly selecting the horse to begin with.

So before we talk about how to start training a young horse, let's review how and why I chose this yearling in particular, and why it's important that you make good decisions for yourself when your time comes.

My friends, I cannot say this strongly enough: *You simply cannot train for disposition.* You cannot train for a good mind and temperament. You can only work with what you have. You cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. But to have a horse who is naturally compliant, a horse who wants to please, wants to be with people, a horse with a real work ethic . . . those things make training not only significantly easier and more effective, but they also mean that you will always have a safer and better equine partner.

In my book *Building Your Dream Horse*, I talk about horse personalities and how they are created. Certainly one of the primary factors is breeding, and horse breeding is an industry. Like any industry, some people do it very well and others do it poorly. Some people breed horses because of the appeal. But these

breeders lack the education and experience that experienced breeders have achieved. Also, many breed for what I believe are the wrong priorities for the majority of horse owners. Remember, you only want to breed what you want to pass on to the next generation. For example, if you have a mare you like, but she is neurotic, this behavior can be carried on to the next generation. A foal takes on 60 to 70 percent of her dam's physical, genetic, and athletic traits.

Instead, these breeders breed for conformation, performance, even color, rather than a good mind, which is low on the list. In my opinion, that should consistently be a number-one trait you look to pass on. A great mind is pure gold—truly invaluable.

In addition to a great mind, the emotional level (flight instinct) is a very important area. The temperament, personality, and instincts of the horse are all hinged on the emotional level. The emotional level is also the hardest area to change. Most novice riders, unless extremely confident with low fear levels, should seek out horses with low to average emotional levels.

Gender also affects a horse's temperament. Geldings are the most even tempered. The sun sets and rises with a gelding. Mares are three times more difficult to train because of hormonal issues. However, there are exceptions like Jaz, who currently is very compliant, though she is only 1 year old and is subject to change because of hormonal changes. Stallions are five times more difficult to train. Their only job is to breed and fight. Again, there are nice stallions for breeding and showing who are well behaved in social settings. However, generally speaking, only one out of about a hundred stallions has the right mind and personality to be a breeding stallion.

Even though you might choose an even-tempered, good-minded horse, remember that you are still working with a baby and that babies do baby things like striking, kicking, rearing, and biting. Like young children, they are unpredictable, and that's just what they do, which can make your training job challenging. Last year I held a clinic called "Walking with Babies" and nine clients attended with their 6-month- to 2-year-old babies. One year later only two people still had their babies because of all the training work involved. The positive side of raising a baby is that you are starting with a clean slate. But the horse is a mirror reflection of your understanding and capabilities of training. It is like raising kids. They will become well-behaved adults if you set standards early on and are willing to enforce those standards as necessary.

In addition to the great mind and temperament, which we can also think of as the mental and emotional aspects of the horse, the physical aspect is of course a vital element. Yes, a horse can be trained for any discipline, but conformation is critical to *excel* in a particular event. Just as athletes in various sporting events will have very different body types, so too should horses. So depending on your goals, you need to select the correct body type with the

available best conformation, especially if you have dreams of competing at top levels.

No matter what discipline you want to do, the horse you choose should be medium- to short-backed for performance (even for trail), and have nice sloping shoulders and a balanced top line, which means the neck, shoulders, and hips are level. Also for any breed, whether Arab, Warmblood, or Appaloosa, choose a horse with the biggest-diameter feet, so that the horse's weight is supported properly. For example, a 1,000-pound horse should have approximately 6-inch-diameter feet. Just think of an 800- to 1,000-pound horse balanced on four small pins. This can lead to conformation problems later on. For example, a client's 1,000-pound 5-year-old horse has small hooves (only about 4 inches in diameter), which causes him to travel poorly and has caused arthritis in his hocks or navicular bone. The horse was bred for looks and not function.

That being said, there are of course many exceptional breeders out there who do focus on disposition and trainability in addition to physical attributes. Their horses are likely to be more expensive, but I believe it can be well worth



Jaz's sire, Little Steel Dust, photographed as a 20-year-old. This magnificent stallion passed away in 2003 at 29 years of age. Jaz is one of his final foals.



Jaz's lovely dam.

the extra money. You can either invest up front in a horse who takes to training and partnership easily, or you can buy a horse on whom you may have to spend far more for training because she is resistant, doesn't want to be with you, and is not naturally compliant. And you may still end up with a horse who is very likely to require higher maintenance for her whole life.

I prefer the lower-maintenance model, especially since that type often delivers higher performance at the same time. Gail and Brent at Jaz Ranch selected Jaz Poco Salsa from their available stock because they felt she was a horse they would want to keep. *I want this horse to be a lifetime partner for me.* So I did what I think everyone should do when looking to buy or breed a youngster—be very selective and buy for the traits that are likely to give you the horse with whom you will want to spend a lifetime.

Now I happened to select a foundation-bred Quarter horse, since this was a good candidate for the type of performance work and riding that I wanted to do with her. But please do not think I am saying that everyone should get this breed of horse—far from it. The point I am trying to make is that within every breed, there are exceptional, good, mediocre, and poor breeding programs. Some breeds have bad reputations because breeders have changed characteristics that

they were breeding for. For example, in the 1950s and '60s, Arabs excelled in stock horse classes. Then some breeders wanted to make Arabs appear hotter for halter classes so they bred for this characteristic. Regardless of breed, responsible foundation breeders want to preserve traits such as a good temperament or disposition, trainability, compliancy, and a quiet mind, and some produce horses who excel in particular events or sports, such as reining or jumping.

Whether you love Arabs, Thoroughbreds, Paints, Morgans, Appaloosas, or any of the other dozens of horse breeds and their crosses, simply recognize that there are significant differences in the animals you will get from a conscientious, selective, and highly knowledgeable breeder, compared to just buying at random. And realize that these differences can and do have an enormous impact on how easy the horse will be to train, how well she will perform, and how good your relationship with the horse will be. So don't think I am trying to sell everyone on getting a Quarter horse. I am simply trying to convince you to take the time, do the research, and invest the money to get a well-bred horse—meaning the horse is very sound mentally, physically, and emotionally.

Different breeds of horse really can offer different benefits and challenges. There are no good or bad breeds; they are just different. Which is exactly how it should be, since we have different goals for what we want to do with our horses.

I want a horse who is powerful, versatile, and super-responsive. I want a working partner capable of training to respond to the subtlest shifts in my seat, one I will be able to use to demonstrate excellence in reining, cutting, cowboy



Jaz at 3 months at Jaz Ranch.

dressage, and many other different disciplines. That versatility requires a horse of a certain mind and body type, and well-bred Quarter horses are often excellent candidates.

So don't pick a breed and then decide what you want to do with the horse. Instead, identify what your goals really are for having a horse, and then pick a breed (or cross) that is appropriate for helping you achieve those goals. For example, Jaz was bred not only for performance but also for all around versatility, like trail riding. I cannot say strongly enough how important I believe it is to get a well-bred horse. (See appendix A, "Selecting and Caring for a Young Horse," for information on researching reputable breeders.)

FIRST TRAINING EXERCISE: HALTERING

The first week with Jaz was a perfect example of why that good mind matters so much. The initial training exercise in my plan was to teach her to accept a halter. You really should start with haltering no matter what your initial training goals are, since it's pretty tough to do much with any horse who can't be haltered.

I had all the usual tricks up my sleeve to get her to accept the halter. I have met plenty of babies who initially wanted no part of me or any piece of equipment, and even in a confined area were a bit of work the first few times to get haltered. But Jaz pretty much just let me walk up to her and put a halter on, and has ever since. Jaz seems to be just naturally complacent around people and could not have made it easier for me. I'd love to tell you that I'm just "that good" with horses, that I can simply walk up to any untrained horse and halter her right up, but I've had my fair share who wanted only to be far away from me at first. But Jaz had the opposite reaction, and her favorite place to be was in my back pocket. Most people might think this is cute, but actually it can be dangerous. For example, if you were leading your baby and she got distracted and turned her head, she could step on you. Because of this tendency, it took me a while to teach her to stand away from me.

Now while this has certainly been a pleasant experience for me, it doesn't help anyone learn with a more typical colt or filly, who can be very tough to get haltered at first. So let's review what I *expected* I would be doing with Jaz to teach her to accept a halter, and some of the techniques we often use at the ranch.

As I mentioned earlier, the first thing you can do to really make this easier on yourself is to get the horse into a small space. If the horse is in a stall or a paddock, you can often even use the gate to create a smaller triangular area where the horse is more easily confined and therefore accessible for you. This will speed up the first part of the training.

However, if the horse is in a pasture or a larger paddock, you will likely have to start by creating a connection with that horse just to be able to get near her, a connection in which she trusts you and also looks to you as her leader. So where does that start? *With moving her feet.*

In this first lesson, you will teach your baby that you will put pressure on her (the go-forward cue) until she stops in a *safe spot* you have chosen, where you then let her relax. The purpose is to show her you won't eat her lunch. Your distance from your horse in this lesson may be more or less depending on how comfortable she is with you. Start at about 30 feet. The progress you make in this exercise will depend on the mind of your baby. Each youngster will have very different fear levels. You can walk right up to some babies, like Jaz; others may take a while.

This technique is successful for me the vast majority of the time. I personally do not like to train horses by luring them with food, but certainly some people also have good success in getting the animals more comfortable around them by feeding hay or other treats right near themselves. If you do try this as a backup, please do *not* ever feed the horse from your hands; always feed in a bucket or on the ground. Hand-feeding is a terrible habit to start because it encourages the horse to nuzzle your hand looking for food and unintentionally bite your fingers because they got in the way. (One of my clients was hand-feeding her horse, which she had always done, but this time she had her fingers curled up. Unintentionally the horse took the top of a finger with the grain.)

In rare cases, you may need to go to the extreme route of roping the horse to be able to approach and halter her safely. I generally do not recommend people try this themselves unless they are trainers (or are very good with a lariat), but some animals are so initially disinterested (or fearful) of being with people that they are resistant to the point of being dangerous. So even if you managed to get the animal into a small space, she may present you with her hindquarters and try to kick, or even to rear up at you. In this case, if other attempts to make her comfortable around you fail, consider roping her around the neck so that you have equipment in place that gives you some physical control (and safety) while you teach her to be haltered and to relax in your presence.

The ultimate goal is to get her to stop and relax in the safe spot with her eyes on you so that you can approach her and halter her. Getting her to this point can take from one day up to two weeks. Stop the lesson when you get some kind of change or improvement, the bigger the better. When you are ready to continue the lesson, restart where you left off.

Stand in the center of your horse's paddock and position yourself at an angle behind her withers. Behind the withers asks the horse to go forward and in front of the withers will slow or stop the horse. Mentally chose a spot along the fence that you want to be the safe spot. During this exercise, you should be

displaying low-key body language: walking slowly, arms at your sides, with relaxed posture.

Drive her forward at the hip. If she overshoots the spot, change your position so you're now in front of her withers to change her direction back toward the spot. If you eventually get her close to the spot and she stops, immediately step back to take the pressure off. Even if she is not facing you, you want to reward her because your goal is to teach her to stop in the chosen spot. This is basic "Pressure and Release 101." Reward the filly for the behavior you want by releasing the pressure the second she performs that behavior. If you continue to do this, releasing the "pressure of your presence" as the youngster stops and allows you to become closer without moving, you will be able to approach her. This also ties in with natural herd behavior. The lead horse keeps the others moving. If you are moving their feet and controlling their direction, they will start to look to you as their leader, even with this very basic introductory work. It starts a foundation for the relationship, even though the horse is primarily fearful of you at this point.

Now your next goal is to get her to stop in the spot and turn her eyes on you. To do this, drive her forward and repeat the exercise until she stops one time and turns her eyes on you. When she has stopped in the spot and is standing relaxed with her attention on you, you can go to the next step. The next step in haltering will require some assessment on your part. Again, I was able to put a halter right on Jaz, but with most babies you will need to first get them used to having their face, head, and ears touched with a cane. (It is safer for you if you touch her first with an inanimate object.) This is a de-spooking exercise to establish better emotional control.

Yes, you could force it by just putting a halter on a scared horse right away to start to work with them. But why would you want to rush? Your goal should be building a relationship of trust with you as the leader. With more nervous horses, and especially with young horses, this should be done very patiently. I would much rather spend a few days teaching a baby to quietly accept a halter than to risk losing her trust.

Once you determine how slowly you need to progress, introducing yourself, physical contact around the face, and the equipment around the head, it's all done with the same pressure and release pattern. Only release the pressure if the horse quiets, even if just for a second.

If you need to start with the cane, here's what you do. Take the cane and roll the string up around so it is not dangling or moving. (During the first part of this exercise you don't want the string flapping around.) Approach your baby with the cane at your side and stand parallel to her withers. Let her see the cane and sniff it. Then gently touch and rub her on the shoulder with the cane. If she moves, stay with her until she quiets or stops resisting, and then immediately

pull the cane away. If your baby takes off, repeat the process of getting her to the safe spot and start again touching her with the cane. She will soon learn it is too much work to run off each time. Now the tricky thing with young horses is recognizing those subtle “baby-gives.” It’s the tiny tries they offer and hard-to-recognize small tries that you need to reward so they can start putting two and two together to see what you are asking. This is another reason for you to take the training slow yourself. It’s much easier to recognize their small attempts to comply if you are only asking for small behaviors.

When your baby is comfortable about being touched on the shoulder, touch and rub her on the neck, using the same pressure and release technique you used before. Next rub her nose and face. Do not touch her legs with the cane, since at this early stage it is too confronting. When your horse appears comfortable and relaxed with this last exercise, unwind the string on the cane and drape the string over her neck, near and around her poll. Once she is relaxed and accepting of this, drape the string around her neck again. Hold the cane in one hand and the string in the other and pull gently toward you. When the front foot nearest you moves toward you, release the pressure.

When you think she is ready for a halter, stand parallel to her neck on the left side. Open up the halter so you will be able to slip it on her nose from below. Holding the halter in one hand, put your right arm around her neck (try not to make much contact) and then grasp the halter with both hands and bring it up on her nose from underneath and then tighten and clasp it over her poll. Sounds easy, but you may find it takes practice.

Let me assure you that while teaching a horse to accept wearing a halter may seem mundane, it is absolutely the most critical building block for everything you will be doing with your youngster. Halter-breaking, or giving to the halter, is a very important method for teaching horses to give to pressure, and one that carries over directly into saddle and bridle work. Plus, for the rest of your life with your horse you will be haltering her every time you want to do something together. And there are few chores less inviting than fighting with an adult horse to get a halter on her head day after day. People ask me all the time, “How do you get your horses to lower their heads to be haltered?”

I don’t teach horses to lower their heads to be haltered; *instead, they lower their heads because they have learned it’s the most comfortable way for them to be haltered.* By lowering the head, little to no pressure is put on the poll during haltering. So when we are consistent, employing the immediate releases of pressure to reward them while training them to accept a halter, the horse then learns to avoid the pressure altogether by lowering her head for you. And certainly, using methods that communicate with horses in a way they understand also increases their trust of you and makes them want

to be with you—additional reasons they will come to you and stand quietly for haltering.

Once you can get the halter on the horse, frequently practice putting it on and taking it off. Start with asking her to wear it for a very short time, and then build up to longer intervals. Additionally, over time you can expect the horse to stand more quietly for having it put on as well as for the removal.

Now, about leaving it on: I know a lot of people just keep halters on young horses, especially out in pasture. They experience difficulty in initially haltering a baby, and rather than investing the time and patience in training the horse, they just leave the halter on. I will say simply that I do not believe this is a safe practice for any horse. It is far too easy for the halter to get caught on a fence or a variety of objects, and for the horse to panic and become injured. It is not a good practice to leave a halter on a young horse anytime when you cannot see the horse. Also, forcing a horse to wear a halter twenty-four hours a day is not more likely to acclimatize her to the equipment. If anything, it may teach a horse to want to avoid wearing it if she associates the equipment with having it on all the time. After all, the halter is not the most comfortable thing in the world. Instead, take the time and the patience to train your youngster to accept a halter quietly and with ease. It is the absolute best thing you can do to start any young horse and will give you a lifetime reward.



Jaz makes teaching a horse to accept a halter look easy.

LEADING

Because Jaz accepted the halter right away, I moved into the basics of teaching her to lead as our next exercise. Teaching a young horse to lead seems like it would be pretty easy, and sometimes it is. But more often than not, people start tugging forward on a lead rope, and the young horse has not yet learned that there is supposed to be a connection between that lead rope and her feet. And she does what most babies do—she resists what she does not understand. There you stand, pulling on the lead rope with all your might, trying to get that baby to go forward, and unknowingly, you have helped her get into a great position to lock up at her knees and resist you.

So instead, when we teach a young horse to lead we begin by asking her to move sideways, at an angle of about 45 degrees to begin with. Stand at a 45-degree angle from her head and maybe 4 to 6 feet away, and then make contact with the lead rope. Maintain the contact until she steps over—even a little bit. If you are making contact and she is still not taking a step, increase the angle you are standing at up to maybe 90 degrees as needed. It is more difficult for her to “lock up” sideways, so at some point if you are pulling or maintaining pressure sidewise, she *will* step over. The second she does, release the contact for the reward. Like



It's easiest to teach horses to lead where they are comfortable, so I start basic work in Jaz's paddock.

anything else, horses need a reason to learn or change a behavior. For her to learn to step when you pick up that lead rope, to make that connection in her mind, she needs a reason she can understand. By placing her physically in an uncomfortable position where she almost has to step based on the angle and contact, and then rewarding her every time she does, she will get the lesson much more quickly than trying to pull forward, where you have little opportunity to reward her.

Here's where repetition comes into play. Pick up at your angle, hold, and release upon any small step she takes. Then go to the other side and do the same thing. Keep going back and forth, asking her to step sideways toward you, and as the horse gets more responsive you can decrease the angle at which you are asking, until the horse seems to be taking a step forward on his own. The trick with this is to be looking for the horse to be moving in the direction of the poll, not her nose. The "magic" happens when the horse learns that her feet should be moving in the direction of the poll, rather than the nose.

When the horse starts leading with you, on the left side walk in a circle to the left, keeping her with you as you maintain going left. When she is consistently staying with you at the circle, try going straight. Take a couple of steps forward. If she stops, go back to the circle to encourage the horse's feet to keep moving when yours are moving. It's best to start this work close to the



Remember to start with asking the horse to step sideways toward you as you cue rather than forward.



Once the basics are going well in an area where the horse is comfortable, progress to doing the leading work near but outside of her paddock.

youngster's stall, or better yet in her paddock (if she has one), to increase her comfort. Otherwise, just stay close to where she is normally kept while doing this exercise initially, to help assure her focus is on you and not on her anxiety.

Once she is going with you, work on just leading around her stall or paddock. Slowly go a bit farther out each time, always coming back when you can sense she is getting anxious. As you continue the leading training, you are controlling her feet, which is getting her attention on you and also setting you up to become her leader.

Jaz has been very quick to take to the leading lessons so far. But even with her low emotional level and natural sense of wanting to be with me, I am still taking my time and not rushing her through anything. While she has not seemed anxious during many lessons, I will continue to proceed cautiously and do baby steps in every lesson. There is absolutely no reason to rush with a youngster when you are trying to build a fantastic horse for yourself, and the better you do these basic foundation exercises, the more solid your horse is going to be at every training level.

HOOF HANDLING

Another important training objective to tackle correctly is handling feet safely. You can wait on a lot of training, but not on hoof handling. You need to handle the feet to pick out the hooves, to prepare for handling by the farrier, and also to be able to check them any time you may detect a soundness problem.

For hoof handling, I recommend using a cane for safety reasons. If the horse strikes, I am out of harm's way since I am using a long "extension" of my arm. With this aid, both of you can be safe. A cane (or something like it) is a great tool for the next phase. Our tack store offers a cane with a curved end called a horseman's cane. So if you do not have one, you can either get an inexpensive cane at a local drugstore or contact us at the ranch for one of ours (see appendix B). It is a very effective piece of safety equipment. The curved end of the cane can be used as a hook, again providing you a safe extension of your arm and hand to pick up the hooves.

Using a cane is a type of sacking out exercise. The concept of sacking out comes from the old days when cowboys tied a horse to a strong post, and then used a gunnysack, flapping and slapping the horse with the sack. The idea was to desensitize the horse so that it would not be nervous around the legs and body with objects. The problem with this method was that when you tied them hard and fast like that it usually caused them either to injure or kill themselves. We are doing the same thing with the cane, but the difference is we are not tying them hard and fast but have them in hand.

To begin, stand slightly in front of your baby's withers about two feet away. You will be safe in this position if she strikes or kicks at the cane. *Never* stand in front of your horse. If she bolts forward, she can come over the top of you. Hold the cane in one hand and extend the other out to hold her halter. This way if she bolts, you can block her exit.

With the cane, I start rubbing the outside of the legs from the top down to the hooves, then the inside of the legs, under the belly on both sides, and last



Safety should be your top priority when you start work with hoof handling. Take your time; be methodical and patient. Rub the leg above the hoof first.



When relaxed, touch the leg above the hoof.



Put pressure on and yield when the horse gives you the foot.



Continue the lesson until the horse picks up the leg and leaves it up and is comfortable. Repeat with the rear legs.



Pick up the foot using your hands.



Gently hold until the horse yields.



Release when she yields.

the rear legs. If the horse is fidgeting, I keep rubbing until she relaxes. Pressure and release again; reward the horse by removing the contact only when she is being quiet and not moving. When you can make contact with the horse in all of these zones with the cane, and the horse remains standing quietly and is calm, then you can move on to the next step, picking up the feet.

Begin by reaching down with the curved handle of the cane to the front leg just above the pastern. Put some pressure (by lightly lifting or pulling on the cane) on the area and when the horse yields by picking up at all, release immediately. Keep repeating this as needed on the same leg until the horse almost leaves the foot there on her own. Then move on to the other front leg and start over.

Once the horse is comfortable with the pressure of the cane (and this could be anywhere from ten to thirty minutes on each side), try picking up the hooves with your hands rather than the cane. How can you tell the horse is comfortable? Make sure she is not moving away when you add pressure on the contact of the cane, and that her overall body posture seems relaxed and complacent. Note that if you have been inadvertently releasing the contact while the horse was moving away, you have been teaching her to resist. So remember, stay with it until she quiets.

When you are ready to use your hands, stand again in front of her withers and use your arm/hand just like the cane. The second the horse picks up her feet at your contact, release. But if she starts moving away, do not release. Be sure you don't hold the hoof too tightly, which will cause a lot of horses to resist much more and slow the training greatly. Pretend you are holding a baby bird in your hand when you pick up a hoof—gently but firmly enough not to lose it if she moves.



Teach her to lift the leg high and hold up to prepare for the farrier.

Another common mistake people make is to initially try to hold the hoof too high off the ground and/or for too long. Remember, baby steps! Start by holding it just barely off the ground and for only a second. Over time, increase first the amount of time you are holding the hoof just barely off the ground, and then later how high the leg is yielding off the ground. As you slowly acclimate your horse to having any of her four feet picked up (and you should be doing this every single day if you can), then eventually you can also start lightly tapping the hooves with the cane or even a rock, in preparation for the farrier.

We have been working with Jaz's feet every single day, and once she was fairly solid with my handling of her hooves and legs, then I started having the rest of the staff work with her as well to increase her comfort of strangers picking up her feet. She has just had her first trim by my farrier and because we had worked with her regularly, it was very straightforward. If you have a good farrier, keep them happy and safe by spending a lot of time training your horse to be compliant and relaxed for hoof work. Many farriers complain that people seem to expect them to help train their horse for safe hoof handling. Don't fall into that mindset. It is *your* job to train your horse to be safe and quiet for trimming. Hoof health and care is one of the most critical things for a lifetime of use and soundness, so make sure you invest early and often into ensuring your horse can be trimmed as needed without a lot of drama.



Because I took my time and took small steps in asking for "longer and higher" with each hoof, when Jaz finally had her first farrier trim, she was compliant and quiet—something every farrier greatly appreciates.

GROOMING

Another training exercise I started with Jaz this first month, and one that we all tend to enjoy as horse lovers, was grooming and basic body work. Remember that Jaz had really not been handled much prior to coming to me. She has begun to grow a winter coat and needed to be cleaned and de-thatched a bit. Also as part of basic safe handling and groundwork, she needed to learn to be relaxed and trusting so that we could touch her all over and groom her. As with checking feet, you need to be able to safely touch your horse anywhere to determine if she is sore or injured, to apply an ointment, and the like. For health as well as safety, your horse must yield to and relax for your touch.

You may have experienced some horses who really love grooming and others who don't. Sometimes the horses who do not enjoy it had a poor start with grooming techniques. Don't take for granted that even something that seems as basic as brushing your horse will be easy.

Look for nervousness or fear when you approach. You should have already worked on the previous exercises with haltering and handling feet, meaning you have done pressure and release work regarding physical contact and equipment with much of your horse's body. When you approach with a brush or a curry, whatever you are starting with, allow the horse to see and smell it first. You will find that most horses are also more accepting of a brush that you have used on other horses, rather than a brand new one with "store smell." So don't feel like you have to run out and get all new grooming supplies!

Allow the horse to smell the brush, and then begin around the shoulders and withers. These are contact spots where horses often groom and nibble on each other, and so they are more familiar areas for contact. Plus they just seem to feel good to horses. Do not use too much pressure, just medium contact, a consistent hand, and if you see the horse react to the contact by backing away, stay with her until she relaxes and then stop grooming. Let her pause for a moment and then start again.

Because many young horses do not yet safely tie or cross-tie, you can do this while someone is holding the lead rope, or even in the horse's stall or paddock. Pay attention to areas where she really seems to enjoy being rubbed, which can become a good source of reward for you later. After the shoulder, back, and hindquarters can safely be groomed, you can move onto grooming the belly and legs.

Remember always to watch for signs that the horse may react negatively (ears pinned, backing or going forward, leg cocked, and the like). Young horses are extremely unpredictable and you just never know. You need to make sure that safety is your number-one priority when acclimating a horse to being



Grooming is not only good training time, it's good bonding time.

touched in areas she may find very vulnerable. While I do believe that solid foundation training and the right approach makes it much safer to be around horses, they are nonetheless enormous, powerful animals and it is very easy to get careless or just be in a bad position when a horse moves . . . and get hurt as a result.

Here are a few safety tips when grooming your baby:

- Never stand directly in front or behind your horse while grooming. If you stand in front of her she could bolt forward, strike at you, or come over the top of you. If you stand behind her she could kick out at you. Instead, stand off to the side of your horse and be aware of her emotional state.
- Try to stand near her shoulder while grooming.
- Always work close to your horse. Remember basic physics. If you are near her shoulder, you won't be struck as hard by her feet and you will not get the full force of a kick if you stay close to the body when you work about her hind end. You are less likely to be hurt by a kick if you are right next to the horse than if you are within a range of one to several feet away.

- Work on the mane and then the tail last. Before you start pulling on her tail, make sure you have done plenty of grooming and desensitization on her hindquarters first.
- Always make sure your horse knows you are back there. Run your hand from her back to the hip to the haunch so it's not a surprise she reacts to.

Most horses come to love grooming time. It can be a great time for you both to connect and relax, a time when your horse learns to trust you. Once your baby can be safely groomed, start and end every training session with grooming. This will relax her and get her focused on you, and she will begin to associate work with something pleasant as well.

Training Month 2

Earning Jaz's Respect and Teaching Her to Tie

During Jaz's first month of training we covered some important basics: haltering, leading, working with feet, and grooming. In November our next goals need to incorporate further elements of halter-breaking, which in practical terms really involves teaching the horse to give to pressure. Typically this means I move into round pen work, start the post exercise (for tying and more), and then begin lead-line work; though not always in that order, and as you will learn with Jaz, I *had* to change the order.

You earn respect by controlling your horse's feet, space, movement, and direction. Good ground manners are a vital first step in being able to do a lot of training work now and in the future. The manners we are teaching we will benefit from now, next week, or next month. You have to be able to safely lead your horse around the property, even to get to and from a round pen or arena. A horse who cannot be easily or safely handled on the ground is not enjoyable in any way, and you become less likely to want to work with her. Proper ground manners mean your horse respects your space and keeps a proper distance when being led and while standing, is quiet while being tied, and so on. During actual leading the horse should learn what I call the equine heel. When you stop, she stops. When you turn right or left, she moves with you automatically. When you back up, your horse backs up. When this lesson is complete, you are never making contact with the lead line; it is always slack. Instead she is simply heeling to your body position. It also means she is the correct distance beside you while leading, not too close, and not lagging too far behind.

So while leading a horse around may seem like a mundane chore, it is a fantastic training exercise and one you should plan on doing extensively with your young horse. In fact, "leading" appears quite frequently on my training calendar. It sets you up to do so much more with your horse and really works the emotional and mental aspects without causing any physical stress. And don't

just practice leading your horse in an arena. Practice in other areas where you are both outside of your comfort zones. I recently demonstrated this exercise at a clinic and then had my clients practice it for about three hours that morning in an arena. When I watched them leave and lead their horses out of the arena, they seemed to have forgotten everything! The real learning takes places outside of the arena, such as going down a driveway, going from the cross ties to the arena, and so on. Environments with distractions give you good opportunities to teach your horse ground manners. Every time you take your horse out of the stall or the pasture is a training opportunity in ground manners. Make every walk you take with your horse count.

Before you start, determine the distance you want the horse to walk beside you. (I like a horse about 24 to 26 inches from my shoulder.) The sequence for this exercise is pre-cue and then according to what she does a reward or a follow-through.

Cue your horse to go forward from the standstill with a kiss or a cluck or by extending your hand with the rope up and forward. Always give her a chance to move forward just from the pre-cue. Now she may do one of three things: resist (lean on it), walk ahead of you, or lag behind.

If she does not move and resists, do *not* pull on the lead rope. Instead, apply light pressure to the line that matches the pressure she is offering (no more and



Teaching your horse to lead properly is one of the most important first lessons. This photo shows leading at the distance I prefer.

no less). Once she starts forward, immediately release the pressure and continue walking with a slack line as a reward. Always walk your horse with a slack line.

If your horse starts to walk ahead of you, the follow-through is to stop and ask her to back up several steps. Horses do not like to back up because it means more work, so this negative reinforcement makes them want to do what you are asking. Horses need a reason to change a behavior; backing is a reason they can understand.

Plan on backing your horse up a lot. Your young horse is very likely to try to walk ahead of or behind you. Walking ahead of you is more common because young horses are often nervous at first. Don't get frustrated; just keep stopping and backing. If you do it right away and every single time the horse crosses the line of where you want her to be in relation to your body, she will get it eventually. Using a training stick on the ground in front of the horse can help provide extra incentive for her to back if she seems resistant.



Here I'm correcting Jaz for walking ahead of me, asking her to back up.

Likewise, you may have a horse who is prone to lagging behind you. To work on this, carry the stick with your left hand while holding the lead line in your right hand (you will be on the left of the horse while walking forward). If the horse slows or falls behind, cluck or kiss as a pre-cue, and then as a follow-through reach back with the training stick to tap her on the hindquarters. Use as much pressure as you need to get her to go forward faster and nothing more. Like walking ahead, you will need to do this every single time she starts to lag behind.

Once you have the physics down for how to react if the horse walks ahead or behind, get out there and start leading your baby as much as possible. Over time, as her confidence builds you can move farther and farther from her paddock and visit new areas. Your goal this month should be leading her as much as possible, giving more specific cues, and having a higher expectation for her performance as the month progresses.



Here I'm correcting Jaz for lagging behind me, asking her to go forward.



This photo demonstrates the distance I like my horse to be away from me while on a lead line when we are standing still. In the event the horse bolts or spooks, she is unlikely to run over me from where she is.

BEGINNING LINE WORK

I had planned on round penning Jaz for the next set of exercises. The round pen can be such a great training aid that I wanted to get a few sessions underway with Jaz before the rains really started. Winter appeared to be fast approaching and I close my round pen when the footing gets poor. In bad weather if I didn't have a covered arena, I might have to use my imagination to find places to work my horse. You might have to do this too if you don't have a covered working area. Some ideas are a driveway to practice leading or in a stall to work on moving the shoulders or hips over.

When it's available, I usually start with the round pen as a precursor to line work for a couple of reasons. An ideal size for a round pen is 50 to 60 feet. First, the round pen provides a safe environment that allows more control of the unbroken, green, or unruly horse. It has no corners that she can get "stuck" in. Second, it's a great place to build a relationship in which your horse respects you, where she starts to look to you for leadership and guidance, and where you establish all the basic cues for going forward, halting, and changing direction—all foundations for line work. But lots of folks don't have a round pen, and while it is a great tool, it is just a tool and you do not need one to succeed. And

in this instance, though I had a round pen available, I encountered a not-too-uncommon issue in using it with my yearling, Jaz—*she tried to go through it!*

In these first four to five weeks, Jaz has been super easy to work: quiet, compliant, and naturally responsive. The training exercises have been straightforward, and she has not displayed much of the typical baby behavior that I normally see. So I was not entirely surprised when she did finally show a more pronounced reaction to pressure when I tried to round pen her for the first time.

I use a 60-foot round pen, with panels that are 6 feet high, have 5 rails, and are of very strong pipe construction. Green horses will sometimes try scary tactics to escape the pressure they may feel when enclosed in a round pen with you. While you just want them to move off right or left, they may try to jump over the wall (hence it's much safer to have 6-foot-high panels than 5-footers), charge at you, and occasionally will do what Jaz did—which was to stick her head through a panel and try to get the rest of her body to fit as well.

While Jaz has been pretty relaxed in general, something about the round pen put a lot of pressure on her. No matter how relaxed I kept my body language or how softly I cued her, whenever I asked her to move out she tried to go through a panel. It was simply too much pressure and she only wanted to escape. She had not yet learned to go forward around me to satisfy the flight instinct; she just wanted to go through those panels. A few of my horses in the past have had a similar reaction, and fortunately there is an easy fix. Since safety has got to be your number-one priority and I have all the time in the world to train this wonderful filly, I went straight to line work, but we did the line-work exercises in the round pen.

Since she was quite relaxed for haltering and leading work, I decided instead to teach her the basic cues for going forward, stopping, and changing direction on the lead line (versus starting these “at liberty” in the round pen). By doing the work in the round pen on the line, I had control of her nose and could teach her that pressure is about moving forward, not away.

Like the round pen, line work is about controlling space and establishing the respect and leadership required for a desirable relationship with your horse. For most horses I typically begin with a 12-foot lead line and halter. This gives a fairly safe working distance, while allowing for a high level of control. The shorter the line, the more control you have (back to pressure and release basics). However, with a horse who is extremely emotional, out of control, or just plain aggressive, I will start out with a 25-foot line, and then work back to the 12-foot line as the training progresses. As I mentioned in Month 1, “Charles Meets Jaz,” I also highly recommend starting out with a cowboy or rope halter. The narrow construction of the equipment actually puts more pressure on the poll when they resist. You should not have to, or want to, use one

of these long-term; the goal is to move into the less severe web halter, but they are a good training tool for green horses who need to learn to give to pressure.

Although Jaz was emotional from feeling the pressure in the round pen, she was not at all dangerous or aggressive, so I did begin with a 25-foot line to give me a greater degree of control. I wanted that nose in! My initial goals for the line work with Jaz were simple. I wanted her to move forward in the direction I asked, at the time I asked, and to keep moving until I asked her to stop her feet.

A very common issue that is important to remember is that young and green horses will not understand at first that you want them to *keep* moving. Expect to keep having to ask them (maybe ten to thirty times) to go forward. They will keep stopping and you must immediately keep asking, until they “get it” that you will leave them alone as long as they are moving forward, that there is no pressure while moving. And then of course I wanted her to stop her feet when asked as well, and I wanted her eyes and her focus on me. So for the first step, I asked her to move out clockwise around me. Depending on the emotional level of the horse, you can use whatever “pressure” is required (verbal cue, rope, lunge whip, or the like). The trick is to use as little pressure as possible, but as much as you need to get her feet moving in the direction you ask. And no matter what, stay with it and follow through until the feet are moving. The instant the feet are moving, release the pressure to reward her. Only reapply it if she stops again before you have asked for a “whoa” or halt. And as I said, expect to have this happen a lot at first.

So once Jaz understood going forward continuously, I had her circle around me several times (anywhere from four to twelve rotations), then I asked for her to stop by removing the slack from the line and maintaining the pressure until she stopped her feet. When you are just beginning to teach this, you will likely have to do more than just take up the slack. It's more common to start with 20 or more pounds of pressure to get the horse to stop her feet. Just like when you are asking her to go forward, the key is to use only as much as you need, and never more than that, along with the immediate release of the pressure as soon as the horse stops (gives). Your eventual goal is to have the horse stop her feet as soon as you simply remove a bit of slack from the line, getting lighter and lighter as you progress. This takes time and lots of practice. We don't expect success up front, and even this initial lesson could take up to three or four hours over the period of a week or more.

Once Jaz had stopped her feet, I paused for a moment. The pause is very important for several reasons. First, it is a reward in itself—a respite from pressure, and as horses are by nature lazy animals, no movement is a reward in itself. Second, it helps teach them not to anticipate but to look to you for what to do next. Third, you are teaching another fundamental building block lesson: the “stand quietly” or ground tie. Your horse needs to learn to stand quietly or

ground tie well for lots of everyday activities: to be mounted, at the wash rack, for the farrier, to be groomed, and this is where it begins.

So after a five-second pause or so, I asked Jaz to do it again: clockwise go forward several circles, ask for the stop, pause, praise as needed, and then do it once more. Do not go on to something else or change direction until the horse is moving out and stopping her feet well, along with keeping her attention focused on you. Once those are happening consistently and the emotional level has come down, then you can change direction and start all over again, but going counterclockwise this time.

For correct change-of-direction line work, which is a gymnastic as well as a mental exercise, you need to be paying attention to the nose, shoulders, and hips. The following can be used to measure your success over time:

- The nose should always be in toward you (even if just slightly). This means your horse is paying attention and focused on you. If the nose goes away, pick up lightly on the line—just enough to get the nose back in—and then immediately release the pressure. You may have to keep doing this, but do not give up until the nose is in and stays in consistently.
- Always look for a slight arc through the body as your primary physical goal. For example, you do not want the shoulders either in or out; during line work the horse must be balanced at all times. For the proper physical development of your horse, it is critical to be aware of how your horse is using her body while moving. If your horse is balanced, she will neither be pulling on you nor dropping her shoulder inward. Balance typically begins once she is relaxed during the exercises.
- A key sign that your horse is looking to you for respect and leadership is when your horse is conducting the exercises well in a relaxed posture. Common signs that your horse is relaxed include a consistent gait that is not frantic or choppy (look for a lengthening of the stride), lowered head, licking and chewing, and tail swinging.
- Don't overdo line work. Stop when you see significant improvement. If you are working more than twenty minutes, look at what you are doing, give your horse a break, and try tomorrow. This is demanding work for a young horse, so do it conservatively. We want improvement, but not at the cost of a young body.

These achievements will not happen early on. You look to develop them as you progress. Start out looking for forwardness when asked, halts when asked, and change of direction when asked. The rest is fine-tuning over time. I mention them only so you know what your end goals should be. The real beauty of this exercise, once well established where your horse truly understands the cues, is that you will be able to use this as a fundamental tool to calm her down and get her attention any time and place you have that need. Whether for trailering, shows, or anything new or spooky, this will become a reliable way to calm your horse and center her mind.



Asking the horse to move forward, using whatever pressure you need.



You will need to keep after your horse at first until she understands she is supposed to keep going forward until asked to stop.



Nice forward movement with a bend in the body.



Asking for the halt, you will need more pressure at first to get the horse to stop.



Once you have the halt, make sure the horse has at least one eye on you. If not, send her out again immediately for a single circle and then ask her to stop and focus on you again. Otherwise let her pause for a minute as a reward.



A nice landing with attention on the trainer.



More nice relaxed forward movement with the nose slightly tipped in—no pulling!



Working in the opposite direction.

LANDINGS

Once your baby picks up the change of direction exercise and is consistent and solid, you can move on to landings. This is what I have been working on with Jaz the later part of this month. Landings are a fantastic exercise to teach the stop cue, to teach giving to the halter (and later to the bit), and to encourage a horse to be soft and responsive, and are also a great way to promote self-carriage.

Landings entail asking the horse to move out to the end of the lead line (about 10 feet only). You start by having her do a full circle before asking for the stop. Once she has mastered that, you send her out for just a three-quarter circle before asking for the stop. Again, once that is being done well, you work down to a half circle and finally just a quarter circle. You work the horse on one

side repeatedly, and you keep at it until she is doing three things: keeping her eyes on you the whole time, stopping when asked, and *not* walking back into you. The goal is to have her stop and stand at the end of the line when asked. If she comes in to you, send her out right away and then immediately pick up the line to ask for the stop. It is critical that you make certain she understands the lesson at each stage before moving on to the next.

When you first start working with a horse and connecting with her, it's fine to have her walk in to you for praise, affirmation, or a bit of loving, but later on we want to teach her to come to us. However, please stay focused on the need for the horse to respect and listen to you! So once the connection is established, you need to be able to begin asking for (and expecting) your horse to stand away from you and not be jumping into your back pocket. You have to keep raising the standards as you progress with your training.

You may have to practice landings over and over again until the horse really "gets" it. I probably did fifty repetitions with Jaz before moving on to the next side with her, and for many horses it's three hundred repetitions. The tricky thing about landings is that it's easy to apply too much pressure when you pick up the line to ask for the stop, and then accidentally pull the horse into you. It also takes a lot of practice to release at the right time. Like all of us, horses start a stop before actually coming to the halt. Reward for the behavior, not the mechanics. When they start to stop, that's the time to release.

TYING

As the month progressed we continued to work on leading, hoof handling, grooming, and then also started teaching Jaz to tie. I do not recommend starting to tie a horse until she is halter trained, meaning she starts to understand to yield to pressure. Since we had accomplished this with the leading and beginning line work, Jaz was ready to start learning how to tie as well.

For this exercise I use a tie ring, which is a training tool that allows the rope to drag through it without being tied hard and fast. When the horse gets excited and pulls back; she will feel a drag on the rope, which then releases her higher energy and nervousness. Thus, she gets relief but no instant release. If you do not have a tie ring, you can just wrap a rope around a pipe panel to create a similar training setup where the give of the rope is regulated.

The secret to teaching a horse to tie quietly is to ensure the horse can get some *relief* from the pressure when her emotional level rises, but does not get a *release*, meaning she actually breaks free. A tie ring allows the horse the relief without the release and helps her to learn to yield to pressure. When young horses are first tied up, it is only natural they will want to get away. They can

then panic, which tends to escalate their flight instinct and make things worse. If they are tied hard and fast, it is very easy for a young horse to get hurt, especially if the rope breaks, which happens more often than you may realize. The sudden release once the rope snaps may result in the horse actually flipping over on her back or falling down. This typically causes real trauma from which a horse may never recover, either physically or mentally. Instead, the tie ring is designed to allow a horse to pull some slack in the rope when she panics (or falls). This releases pressure and lowers her emotional level while also reducing the risk of injury. Again, you do not need a tie ring to get the job done; lots of work has been done for years without one of these by using pipe panels and other objects to regulate slack, but they do make the job easier. Also, since it regulates itself, it allows you far greater flexibility in schooling a horse to tie in a variety of situations.

So for the first lessons in tying, keep these tips in mind. First, choose a location where the horse is likely to be very comfortable. Set her up for success. Do not choose to teach a horse to tie in a place with a lot of activity or objects she



Here's how to tie the rope to a rail if you don't have a tie ring.



Begin with the rope attached to the tie ring in the loosest position.



The rope is attached to the tie ring with the tightest adjustment.

will find fearful, or even away from her regular buddies. Instead select an area where she is comfortable and likely to be complacent, in or around her stall or paddock, for example. If you use the tie ring, make sure you follow the directions exactly to ensure the equipment will regulate the slack. Otherwise, choose a 30-foot rope and loop it once around a very solid object. The loop should still allow the rope to give and take; you will be controlling the slack and it simply helps regulate the pressure a bit for you.

Next, tie her up and stand back to watch (or to regulate the rope if need be). In either method, she should have the ability to get some relief from the pressure when she makes contact on the rope, by having the rope give a bit, but *not* get a true release.

How young horses take to tying varies dramatically. Many youngsters will stomp their feet, back up, try to push forward, swing their hips around, whinny, and be very demonstrative in general when trying to figure out how to get away from the restraint. Others quiet within a short period of time. Whether your horse is fussing or quiet, always keep basic tying sessions very short. With the horse who is fussing, you will need to wait until she is quiet for even just a moment in order to reward the behavior before you untie her. Make sure you time it right too. But start out initial tying sessions at just a few minutes. Let the horse experience the feeling of the pressure from the rope, to get relief but not release. Then as soon as she quiets, you can quit and call that lesson number one for tying. The next day, do it again. Spend a few minutes each day tying your baby up, adding a couple of minutes as she progresses. Over time you will want to work up to fifteen minutes, then thirty minutes, then an hour or even two when the horse is a bit older. The key to having a horse who learns to tie quietly for a lifetime of ease is to take it slow, and to teach the horse to tie in a variety of locations.

I start out for short periods in comfortable locations, but over time we will ask the horse to tie in different areas as well that are less familiar and may have more distractions. I have tie rings at five different hitching posts at my training facility, in many of the stalls and paddocks, in the round pen, in the indoor and outdoor arenas, in the wash racks, on different trees around the property, in the cross ties, and in my trailer. And over time, Jaz will be asked to tie at all of those locations, and for longer periods of time.

Once she is more comfortable being tied you can work on what I call the post exercise. This exercise is a good way to find out if your horse has the potential for pullback problems. There are two reasons why a horse has a pullback problem. Either she simply has not learned to give to pressure while on a lead line, or she has learned to yield, but in emotional situations the fear and flight instinct overrides the training to yield. *Remember, the trick is to train her to get relief without giving her the release.*

This exercise is also very useful for working with horses who are quite nervous around their legs or sides. It keeps us at a truly safe distance, better than a cane or a dressage stick, and is also good for farrier practice. Ultimately it teaches the horse to yield to pressure left to right, and also to turn on the forehand.

To begin, I clip a tie ring onto one of the round pen panels. A hitching post or any sturdy rail will work as well. I use a 25-foot line so that if the horse pulls back 12 feet, there is plenty of rope to go through the ring and still keep me at a safe distance. And while I know it's still common practice, I firmly believe you should never teach horses while they are tied to a snubbing post hard and fast. Horses who are very emotional will injure or even kill themselves trying to escape the pressure; without being able to get relief they can really get hurt. This method allows limited pullback so the horse gets that relief, but *not* release. I have been 100 percent successful doing this with every single horse I have worked with.

Thread the line through the tie ring and then attach it to the halter. Stand behind your horse out of harm's way. Then start to slowly bump the horse along her side with the rope. If she gets nervous, keep bumping until she gets quiet—again, even if for just a split second—and then release. You need to be watching very carefully for that moment to release. Over time, you will increase the pressure, making the bumping and the contact of the rope a little more intense. If the horse pulls back, let the rope go, allowing it to slide through your fingers. The tie ring regulates its own drag to maintain some contact with the horse even as she finds relief. Over time, this teaches the horse to tie even with pressure or fearful situations.

Once the horse is solid on one side, flip the rope over her back like a jump rope to the other side and repeat the steps. As the horse becomes more and more comfortable, you can add more excitement and energy to the rope. Anytime she gets in trouble, simply let go of the rope and let the tie ring do its thing.

If you intend to show, trail ride, or camp, your horse simply must tie safely and well. The advantage in having a young horse to work with now, before you are riding, is that you have ample time to work on these key foundation exercises that will help set you up to do all of these things and more with your horse. Take advantage of that time and really make the effort to teach your horse seemingly basic lessons like this, but ones that many horses simply are never taught.

A lot of people have contacted me over the years about wanting to take up horse camping. They write that they have great trail horses, but their horse panicked or acted up when asked to be tied up overnight on the trip. In most



Standing quietly tied.

cases, these horses were never really trained correctly, and some may even have a pullback problem. A horse who is used to being tied up for only five minutes simply cannot be expected to be tied all night. Remember that horses have very strong flight instincts, which we are restraining every time we tie them up. You have to slowly build up a horse's confidence, trust, and comfort before you ask her to tie for long periods of time. But I promise you, it's worth doing. You'll have a horse you can take places and tie up safely as needed.

Training Month 3

Preparing Jaz for Saddle Work and the Vet

We've had a lot of rain here in California this December! The ground is muddy and the air is cold. Because the weather is bad, it is hard to do training outside with Jaz. Luckily, I have a covered arena to work Jaz in. This is a good time to do the post exercise with her.

The post exercise, which I use to help teach horses to tie, uses the same principle of pressure and release. This exercise is also very effective solving or preventing pullback problems. There are two reasons why a horse has a pullback problem. The first is that the horse has simply not learned to give to pressure while on a lead line. The second reason is that the horse has learned to give to pressure only when her emotional level is low. When her emotional level is raised, her fear and flight instinct take over and she forgets about yielding to the pressure of the tied rope. In the past, she has learned that when she pulls back something breaks (the rope, her halter, or the like) and she gets instant relief. Once this happens, she will continue to pull back looking for that relief again. Since we are working with babies, our goal is to get this training right from the start so they never pull back so hard they break the lead. The trick is to train them to be able to get the relief without giving them the release.

This exercise, which offers many benefits for any young horse, builds on the basic tying lessons we did at the end of Month 2, "Earning Jaz's Respect and Teaching Her to Tie." The exercise is very useful for working with horses who are quite nervous around their legs or sides. It keeps us at a truly safe distance, better than a dressage stick, and is also good for farrier practice. Ultimately it teaches the horse to yield to pressure left to right and also to turn on the forehand.

To begin, I use the same basic equipment I talked about in Month 2: a tie ring and a rope. As in Month 2, I clip the tie ring onto one of the round pen panels at eye level. A hitching post or any sturdy rail will work as well. The ring will allow the rope to drag through it without being tied hard and fast. When the horse gets excited and pulls back, she will feel a drag on the rope, which

then releases her higher energy or nervousness. She gets the relief, but no instant release.

However, instead of a 25-foot rope as I used in the basic tying exercise, I use a 30-foot line. This means that if the horse pulls back 15 feet, I have plenty of rope left to go through the ring while remaining at a safe distance. And while I know it's a common practice, I will continue to tell folks that I think it's a terrible idea to train any horse while it is tied firmly to a snubbing post. Any horse who is on the higher side of the emotional spectrum is easily capable of injuring or even killing herself trying to escape the pressure. Without the ability to get relief while panicked, a horse can really get hurt. Using this method allows limited pullback so the horse gets that relief. Again, I have been 100 percent successful doing this with every single horse I have worked with.

First, thread the line through the tie ring and then attach it to the halter. Holding the rope, stand behind your horse at least 10 to 12 feet well out of the kick zone where the horse could invade your space. Start to slowly bump the horse along her side with the rope. If she gets nervous, keep bumping until she gets quiet—again, even just for a split second—and then release. You need to be watching very carefully for that moment to release. Over time, you will increase the pressure, making the bumping and the contact of the rope a little more adamant. If the horse pulls back, simply let the rope go, allowing it to slide through your fingers. The tie ring regulates its own drag to maintain some contact with the horse even as she finds relief. Over time, this teaches the horse to tie even with pressure or in fearful situations.

Once the horse is solid on one side, flip the rope over her back to the other side and repeat the steps. As the horse becomes more and more comfortable, you can bump the rope a little harder and more quickly against her to up the pressure. Anytime she gets in trouble, simply let go of the rope and let the tie ring do its thing.

As I have said, we want to do this with our young horse to prevent a pullback issue from arising. In the event you have a horse who already seems to have a pullback problem, take the time to address it right away. This often seems like nothing more than a nuisance problem, but it can be very dangerous. Horses flip themselves over, fall down, and break lines, resulting in injuries far too often. Even less emotional young horses still lack life experience that can help make them more complacent when faced with events that may spook them when they are tied. For your horse's sake, invest a lot of time in teaching your horse to give to pressure when tied. Typically even a few lessons of the post exercise start to make a huge difference in how the horse ties. Once you have the basics down, keep working at it and also start to tie your horse in various locations, and for longer periods of time, to expose her to more situations that may raise her emotional level.

You can also set up scenarios to teach your horse to tie when her emotional level is raised. If you do not have a round pen, this can also be done at a hitching post or any other solid location where you can attach a tie ring. For example, I have worked with some horses who become very emotional and pull back anytime someone walks toward them. To correct this problem, I set up a scenario where I am doing the post exercise lesson and someone approaches the horse to cause her to pull back. Over time with this exercise, she will learn to tie and not pull back when someone approaches.

I had started Jaz on the basics of this exercise last month. My goal this month was that when I bumped her with the rope (even very lightly), she would not only yield, but yield all the way to the opposite panel so she would be standing parallel to it. Additionally, I wanted to add a few objects and situations to raise her emotional level in order to give her the opportunity to want to pull back, so she could discover getting that relief while remaining tied.

When Jaz was yielding very nicely to the rope, I added a few elements such as a tarp nearby or making loud noises to raise her emotional level. Nothing dramatic yet, just enough to get her to seek the relief by pulling back. We also started tying her at various posts around the ranch so that she would see a lot of different situations and be more likely to learn to give to pressure in a variety of places. By the end of this month she was tying for several hours quietly, wherever we left her.

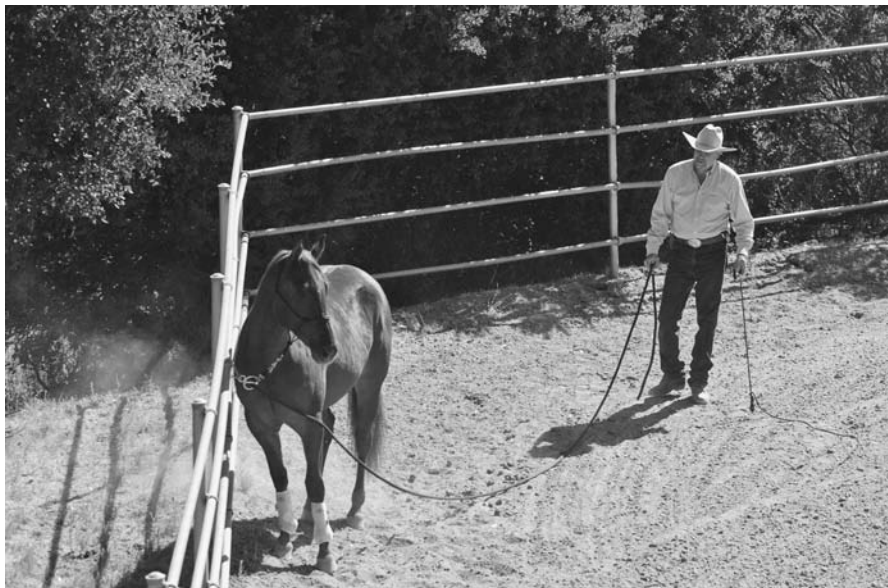


Note the progression of the post exercise in this series of photos.





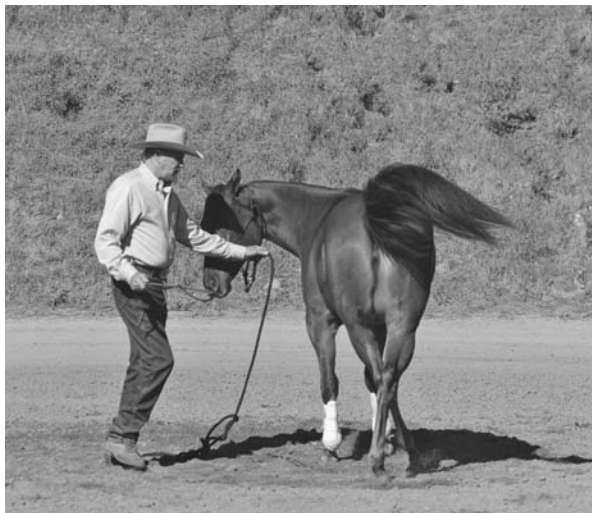




CONCENTRATED CIRCLES

Concentrated circles are another critical foundation training exercise. They provide important schooling of the go-forward cue, and also teach the horse to bend around you and to be suppler. As a basic safety measure, I usually do not begin with concentrated circles. The horse is fairly close to you in this exercise and it is important to have established respect and forwardness first—you want to minimize the risk of being kicked or run over by your young horse. Once I felt it was safe to be quite close to Jaz, I put her on a 12-foot lead line and started with some standard change of direction work out at the end of the line to get her focused on going forward and on what I was asking her to do. When she was fairly consistent and mentally focused on me, I then took the slack out of the rope and moved my hand up to the snap to begin the concentrated circles.

Before you start this exercise you should know that there are three parts to the horse that give you directional control: the nose, the shoulder, and the hindquarters. The horse follows her nose, then the shoulder, ending in the hips and hindquarters. Visualize your horse moving in a circle around you and how you control each of those parts.



Note the position of the hands and the training equipment in relation to the horse as she is asked to go forward.

To begin, hold the line at the snap. If your horse will be circling to the left, hold the line in your left hand. If your horse will be circling to the right, hold the line in your right hand. Keep your arm level and straight.

Stand across from your horse's shoulder and direct the horse forward with the hand holding the line as a pre-cue. If your horse does not go forward, you must follow through by adding pressure. The type of pressure you choose is different and depends on your horse's personality. To add pressure, you can:

1. Lift the horseman's cane at your side and point at her hip.
2. Whip the ground with the lash of the cane to make a noise to add pressure.
3. Use the lash to connect with the hip.

In the beginning your horse will not be moving in a perfect circle so you will have to watch which part needs adjustment. Here are some tips:

- When you stand in the center of the circle, do not move out or back, and keep your hand steady. Stay in the center of the circle (pretend you are glued to it) and keep your arm level and steady when directing the horse's nose. Imagine yourself as the middle of a wagon wheel. The horse should be yielding to you, bending around you, and staying off the contact of the lead.

- If the horse makes contact on the line, pulling it tight, maintain that contact until she gives and then immediately release. Keep working on it until she is soft and yielding for at least several circles in one direction without stopping. Only when she is soft and consistent in one direction should you switch hands and have her go in the other direction.
- If the horse is circling around you with her shoulder and/or hip driving too much into your personal space, direct her out. The horse should be bending and circling around you in an arc. If the shoulder or hip is in, the horse is not in an arc, and thus not doing the exercise correctly. Additionally, this is a safety and a respect issue, so correct these right away when they occur. Tap on the shoulder to drive the shoulder away and on the hip to drive the hindquarters out. And you will need to do that every single time a part of the horse comes into you too close. It must be clear this is never acceptable. The usual rule applies: Use only as much pressure as you need to get that horse out of your space immediately.
- Watch out for kicking, but correct it right away. It is common for a horse to kick at you for the first time, specifically when you are tapping her on the hip to make her go forward. There are a couple of dynamics that can make this happen. The horse is simply reacting to not liking the pressure on her hindquarters and is kicking to “get it away.” You also may be using too much pressure, or the horse may be reacting to being asked to work. In any of these cases, kicking is never acceptable and needs to be corrected immediately. If the horse



The horse is coming in too close to me.

kicks out at you, tap her fairly hard on the lower portion of the leg that kicked you. It's not about punishing the horse or causing her pain; it's just about applying the right amount of corrective pressure so the horse understands that you are in charge and the behavior will not be tolerated. If a baby kicked an alpha horse, the alpha horse would be very tough on the young horse. In the same way you need to be adamant and to make the correction immediately, otherwise don't bother because it's too late. If the horse misses the cause-and-effect moment, there is no point in applying a correction.

- Give your baby every chance to succeed and to keep learning. Always begin with a verbal pre-cue: a kiss or a cluck, whatever you have selected as your basic command for go forward. With Jaz I made the verbal kiss and tapped her on the hip with the dressage stick to have her go clockwise around me. If she did not take a step, I tapped harder. This is one of the tricky areas where you need to balance applying as much pressure as it takes to get the horse moving, but no more than that. The worst thing you can do is halfheartedly “tap, tap, tap” all day on your horse while she ignores you and gets used to enduring that much pressure without responding. This is how horses get heavier rather than lighter. The second worst thing you can do is to use far more pressure than needed; you can easily make a nice horse neurotic that way too. So play around to figure out what levels of pressure your horse needs and be consistent about applying it. With Jaz I found that one medium swat got her going. I applied the pre-cue and dressage stick again anytime she began to stop moving, and within a very short time she understood what I wanted and kept moving around me until I asked her to stop.

When you get your horse moving around you and want to stop her, pull up on the line to take the slack out and make contact until she stops her feet and faces you. This causes the hips to swing over and the horse to stop and line up to face you straight on (see the next section for more detail on this).

Here's how my first exercise with Jaz went. With the line in my left hand in a steady position, I took a dressage stick in my right hand and asked Jaz to go forward in a tight circle around me. Depending on how emotional your horse is, she may want to go on her own without any extra pressure, or she may just need to have the stick waved in the air, or you may need to tap her with it. Again, less-emotional horses tend to require more pressure up front to get them going. Jaz is complacent and comfortable around me, so in her case, I did tap her on the hip to get her going forward initially.



The horse bends around me in a nice arc position.

You may recall from Month 2, when we started doing basic line work, that I discussed the fact that young horses often do not understand that we want them to *keep* moving their feet. They take a few steps and stop. While this should happen less once you get to this exercise (because you have been doing the change-of-direction work), it is a different exercise and therefore a new “situation” for the baby. Thus it is likely you will have to continue to reinforce the go-forward cue.

Once you have this exercise down well, start practicing it in different places. Remember, these are all great opportunities to work on using the mental aspect to bring down the horse’s emotional level, since they all require her attention be on you.

MOVING THE HIP OVER

The next exercise, which follows directly from concentrated circles, is moving the hip over from this position. Again, some important prerequisites should be in place before trying this. The horse needs to yield well to pressure (in this case, very light contact). If you have mastered the change-of-direction work, landings, post exercise, and the concentrated circles, this should be an easy next step.

This exercise is continuing to build the basics for a lot of saddle work, including the all-important one-rein stop. We are asking the horse specifically to give to contact that results in the hips swinging over and stopping so the horse is lined up to face you straight on. Think of this as concentrated landings.



Step one, have the horse circling around you in a good arc.



Step two, raise your hand to take the slack from the line.



Step three, the horse should swing its hips around in response to the pressure of the contact.



Finally, the horse is stopped and lined up looking at you.



To teach this to Jaz, I ask her to go around me in a good arc for several circles with my hand about 6 inches from the snap. Because we are doing this properly now, there is no contact on the line as she moves around me; the rope is slack. When I am ready to ask her to swing her hips around, I pull up on the line to take the slack out and make contact. I maintain this position and the contact until she stops her feet and faces me. With some horses you may initially have to make harder contact or even pull on the line at first. In most cases, however, if you have done the prior work, it's easy for them to grasp that you want a halt, you want the hips swung around, and you want their eyes on you. When you've done all the steps leading up to it, that should make it very easy for them to understand. Typically at this point you have a fairly attentive if not willing student, which makes her naturally watch you and this is very helpful in getting her to turn to face you. Otherwise, remember to look for and reward baby steps. Release the lead line when the horse makes a step in the right direction and keep going until you have progressed such that as soon as you take the slack out of the line, your horse swings her hip over, stops, and looks to you for the next cue. Reward her as you go along by giving her pauses and praise. You should see her getting lighter in the exercise fairly quickly.

DESENSITIZING YOUR BABY TO TOUCH

Because this was such a wet month, I decided it was a good time to do some exercises with Jaz that would get her used to having her mouth, ears, and tail area touched by me or a vet. I started playing with Jaz's mouth, touching her tongue, playing with more of her ear, and putting my fingers inside her ears. I also wanted to desensitize her to getting a shot. These are good exercises to do if the weather prevents you from doing line work or ground manner exercises. All these exercises can be done either in a stall or cross ties as long as one lead is disconnected. The reason you disconnect one lead is so that if your horse moves forward to avoid whatever you are doing she won't feel confined, which adds more pressure.

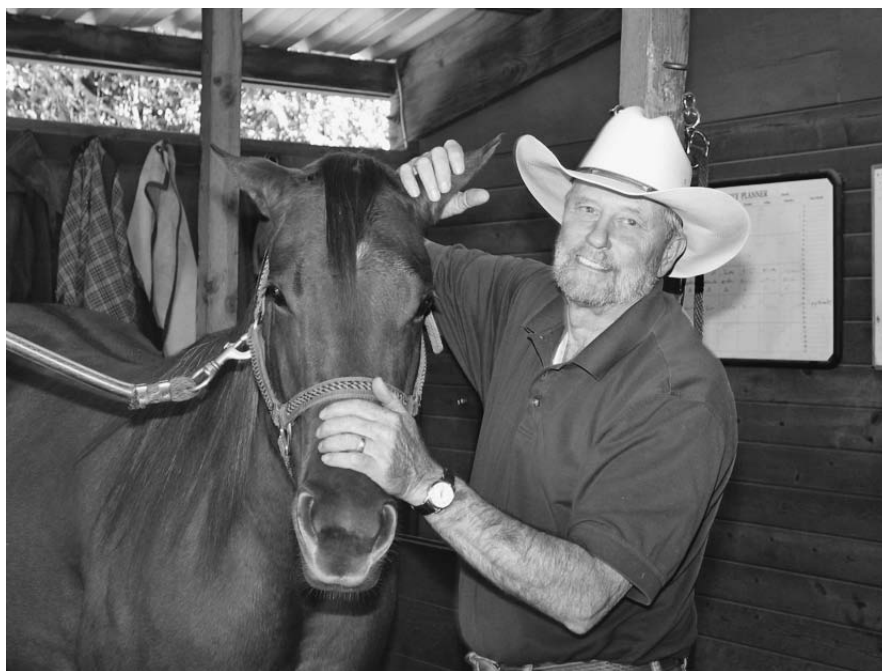
Handling Her Ears and Mouth

Working with her ears and mouth gets the horse getting used to a vet examination. It also readies her for a bit so that when it's time to put a bit and bridle on her it's no big deal.

To get her used to having her ears handled for cleaning, clipping, or bridling, tie your horse (see Month 2) and stand to the side of her head. Hold

her halter in one hand. It is especially important to hold the halter since some horses do not like having their ears touched and may swing their head around to avoid you. With your hand, first rub around her face and ears. If she accepts this, rub the outside of her ears. Again, if she is fussing, do not release the pressure by removing your hand from her ear. This may be hard if your horse is moving her head around to avoid you. When your horse relaxes, continue rubbing. Your final goal is to be able to rub the inside of her ears while she stays relaxed.

To do the mouth exercise, tie your horse and stand to the side of your baby's head, holding the side of her halter in one hand. Touch and rub around the outside of her mouth first with your hand. Remember, if your horse fusses by moving her head around, don't stop rubbing. As soon as she relaxes, release the pressure by stopping. When she accepts having the outside of her mouth touched, you can lightly rub the inside of her lower lip. Next you can rub the inside of her upper lip and around her gum. You can then take your finger and place it in the natural space between the teeth (known as the bars of the mouth) and rub in this space and on her tongue.



First, rub outside the ears.



She relaxes when rubbed on the side of her ear.



She is totally relaxed even with a finger in her ear.



Rub the lip and bars where the bit will be placed.



Eventually, she won't even mind if you hold her tongue.

Working Under the Tail

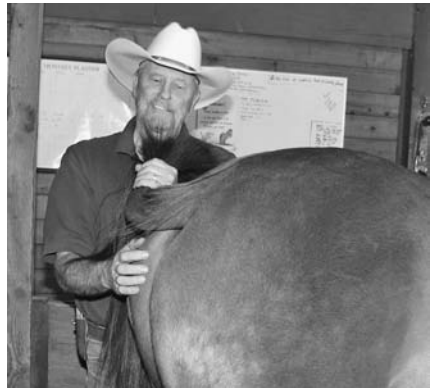
Another good exercise to do is desensitizing your horse to being handled around the tail area. This gets the horse used to having her temperature taken. Often there can be a lot of havoc when a vet has to do this, and they may actually need to put a twitch on or sedate her. So if you spend a little time working around the tail now, when the time comes for temperature taking, it won't be too difficult. Also, if you are an endurance rider, you may want to get your horse used to wearing a crupper.

Before you do this exercise, make sure your horse is comfortable with you being near her rear. If she's nervous and jumpy with you back there, then this is not the time to be working there. You may want to wait till your horse has been sacked out with tarps and plastic bags before you do this exercise. But if your horse is like Jaz was at this time, then you can start working back there.

Start out slowly with this exercise. Stand at the side of your horse's hip and rub along the horse's rear up to the tail head. Next, rub around the base of the tail. You can even gently pull the tail and then release it. When you do this, you may find that your horse's tail stiffens up; this is natural. When your horse is relaxed, you can pull the tail up and release it. Eventually, if your horse needs to wear a crupper, take a soft rope and rub it under the tail.



Start by scratching the area under the tail.



Gradually you will be able to hold the tail and work under it without the horse getting nervous.

Preparing for Shots

This month I also readied Jaz for shots. The two places shots are given are around the neck and the hip. To work with the neck, stand in front of the shoulder so that if your horse strikes out she can't get you. When working with the left hip, put the line in your left hand. When working with the right hip, put the line in your right hand. Stand in front and away from the hip. Be aware that you still could be in firing range, so start out slow and easy until you get to your goal. Your goal is to poke the horse with the sharp end of a toothpick. The sharp prick she will feel simulates being poked with a needle.

To start I jabbed Jaz's neck lightly with my finger. In the beginning expect your baby to flinch and move around. I continued with the poking until she accepted it and then I immediately stopped jabbing. I repeated this process until I thought she was ready to move on to the next level of intensity. Here's how I kept increasing the intensity of the exercise to stimulate being poked with a needle:

- Jab my finger more pointedly.
- Prod with the eraser end of a pencil.
- Poke with an empty syringe (without the needle!).
- Break a toothpick in half and smooth the broken end a little bit and poke with this.
- Poke with the point of a toothpick.

Do this exercise on both sides of the neck and the hip.



Poke with your finger until she relaxes.



Do the same with the eraser end of a pencil.



If you have an empty syringe without the needle, it's a great tool.



Do the same on the hip with your finger first . . .



. . . Then the eraser end of a pencil.



Finally the syringe—they get used to its sight and smell, making the first shots easier.

Training Month 4

Asking for More, and Jaz's First Bath

During January, I worked with Jaz for only six training sessions in all. She does, of course, have regular turnouts also, but remember that I am doing this training program by trying to mimic what I believe most of you can do on your own. The reality is that most horse owners have jobs, families, and perhaps other horses, and free time is often in short supply. Most of my clients are trying to juggle having a career, taking riding lessons, ferrying kids around to school and various activities, making meals, cleaning, and even trying to get in a night out with the grown-ups now and then. Fitting time for a horse into a busy lifestyle is very tough. But I am sure that for most of you, like me, the horse is an integral part of that life and you just make it work the best you can.

For the first three months, I was working Jaz two or three times a week to ensure that the real basics—like halter training and yielding to pressure—were done thoroughly, and I allowed her to be handled by any of my staff, if only for getting her to and from turnout. While I never worked her more than four days a week, I did cut back to two to three days a week this last month to make sure my slower progress would match what many of you can do.

As a professional I may spend five sessions per week on a horse. But the average person can only spend time training two to three times per week because of time constraints. Of course, your horse would be trained more quickly on the five-day-a-week schedule than two or three days a week. Knowing this, clients often ask me “Okay, how long will it take me to train my horse on this slower schedule?” For example, say someone brought me a 2-year-old who was to be nicely finished, meaning a horse who accepted a saddle, bit, and bridle; went on trails and crossed creeks; did arena work; was light to aids; and was a good all-around horse. Working this 2-year-old five to six days a week would mean she would be finished to this level by about age 7 to 9 years. For

someone working a horse two to three times per week, this same horse may be finished by 10 to 12 years old.

My first horse, Tennison, is now 17 years old. I am not able to ride him all the time. In fact, I am lucky to ride him once or twice a week. His training level is about the equivalent of a training level 3 dressage horse, which is a highly finished horse. So even with a minimum amount of time, we can still train our horses. But we need to put our expectations on how quickly we can get it done on hold so that we are sure the horse understands the lessons and we are not rushing the process.

It really is okay if you have limited time to work a young horse, as long as the basics are being provided. What are the basics? Lots of turnout, quality feed, proper hoof care, general wellness, and socialization—essentially, everything to meet the physical, emotional, and mental needs. Other than that, unless you are on a specific time line, you can take your time and progress at your own speed in your training. The key is that you need to establish enough of a basic foundation so you can go back after time away and be able at least to safely handle your baby to start up on training lessons again. Other than that, it's fine to work your horse slowly. It's just another reason to start your horse young, and to be careful and methodical. There is no hurry and it only means the end result is that much better. From talking to clients, I know that most people are able to work with their horse an average of three days a week. So that is what Jaz will continue to get.

In these last four weeks I have continued to refine the line work exercises I started with Jaz, and also gave her a first bath. In addition to working with her just a few days each week, I am ensuring the training sessions are fairly short. Even if you do have more time, this is beneficial for every young horse, for a couple of reasons. One, her young bones and ligaments are still growing. Ten to fifteen minutes of light line work or round penning is fine, but you do not want to physically push or stress your young horse. It's just not worth it. Additionally, the horse's body is not the only immature aspect. The mental limitations of babies must be respected—in other words, their focus (or lack thereof). They have very short attention spans indeed. This is the best reason to keep training sessions short and very specific: to help keep you both on track and focused. There is nothing wrong with spending more time with your horse when you can; the trick then is to mix up the exercises. Go back and forth between short focused exercises. One great tip: Ending a training session by working with the horse's feet is usually very beneficial. After training exercises that have been working her physically, mentally, and emotionally, she is much more likely to be relaxed for the hoof handling.

LOOKING FOR CLEAR IMPROVEMENTS

With the line work, I have been looking for significant improvement each session. This can mean something very different with a young horse than an older horse. What I want to see with Jaz is a progression of small changes that lead to clear improvements from session to session. This includes looking for her to be opening up her stride, stopping better when asked to whoa or halt, and becoming softer in the hocks and more relaxed in the neck; all these are clear indications that she is emotionally relaxing during the work, mentally starting to focus on me, and physically starting to use her body parts more effectively. We are continuing to do mainly the basic change-of-direction exercises. I ask her to go forward on the line in one direction, making sure she is being consistent and showing good energy, then I ask her to stop and do a landing, allow her pause, and then ask her to go forward again in the other direction.

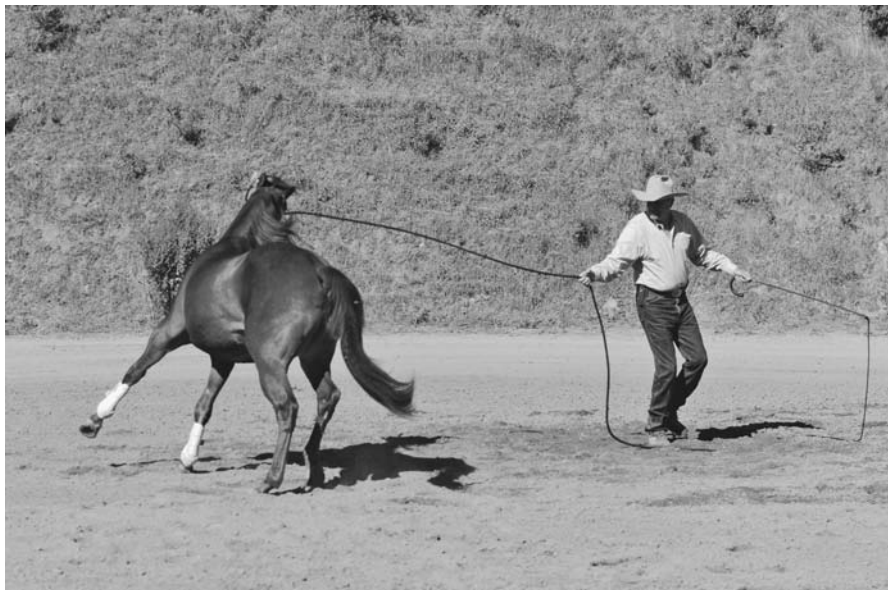
In general I have been working her on a 12-foot lead except for a recent training episode in which I changed to a 20-foot lead, and I want to share the story with you because it is a very common occurrence.

In trying to copy the various conditions that people experience when trying to raise a baby, I am also occasionally moving Jaz from her paddock with a shelter into a straight 13-by-13-foot stall in the main barn. Although she is in the paddock most of the time, we sometimes stall her for a couple of days in a row, since this is how many horses live most of the time. As is common with a young horse in a stall, she can sometimes emerge quite fresh, with a lot of energy.

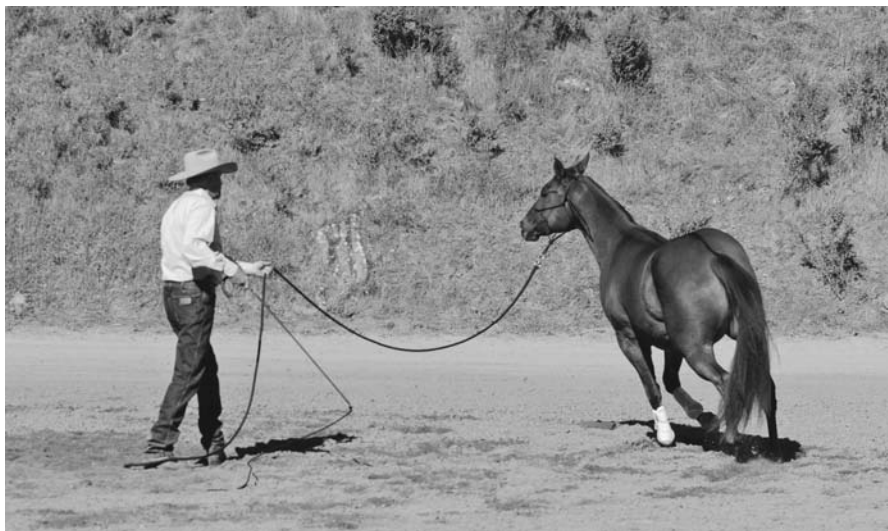
This happened last week. Jaz was fine while being groomed and led into the arena but once asked to move out, she exploded with energy. She was charging around on the line, scrambling, bolting, really “full of vinegar,” and leaning on the line, which she has not been doing recently. People around the barn were happy to see this because she has always been the “most perfect princess.” This just goes to show you that a baby is a baby and they will do silly things sometimes.

I changed to a 20-foot line to allow her (and myself) the extra room. It's just safer all around. I did not just let her dash around madly until she expended the energy. I allowed her to canter and go as fast as she wanted, but she was still asked to stop her feet, pause, and change direction every few circles. If there is any “magic” in this exercise, that's where it is, in the pause and change direction. This allowed her to work out some of her energy while still keeping her mind focused on me.

Within about three minutes or so, her emotional and physical levels dropped down and it was back to business as usual. She came off the contact and there was again slack in the line as she moved around me. She was moving at a forward but relaxed gait, mainly trotting rather than a gallop, and with her nose either straight or bent in toward me.



Jaz is “high” during the start of line work. You can see the tension and excess energy in her posture.



After about five minutes she is relaxed and moving around me freely. Her head is lowered and her stride lengthened, and while you cannot tell from the photo, she has started licking and chewing—signs that she is relaxed.

At this point, I swapped back to a 12-foot line, since the shorter line does give you more control. Her attitude had changed completely and she was now focused on me, waiting to see what I wanted her to do next.

I mention this because it is so common that a young horse will exhibit some serious “yee-haws” at the beginning of a line work session. Don’t worry when this happens; it does not mean you are doing anything wrong. Just make sure two things are happening: that you are physically safe and also that you continue to require that the horse focus on you and respond when you ask for something. Just make sure you are asking for simple things, like a stop, a change, and another go forward. Allow the horse enough forwardness and impulsion to work out some of that excess energy while maintaining control of her direction and space.

FIRST BATH

One immediate result of this explosive training session with Jaz was that she was quite sweaty afterward, so I decided to give her a first bath. She has been so complacent about new experiences that I was not expecting to need to work with her much. She has already been taught to tie and cross-tie and has seen the wash area dozens of times when walking past it. I thought hosing her off would be fast and easy. I was wrong, but then that’s what keeps this job so interesting.

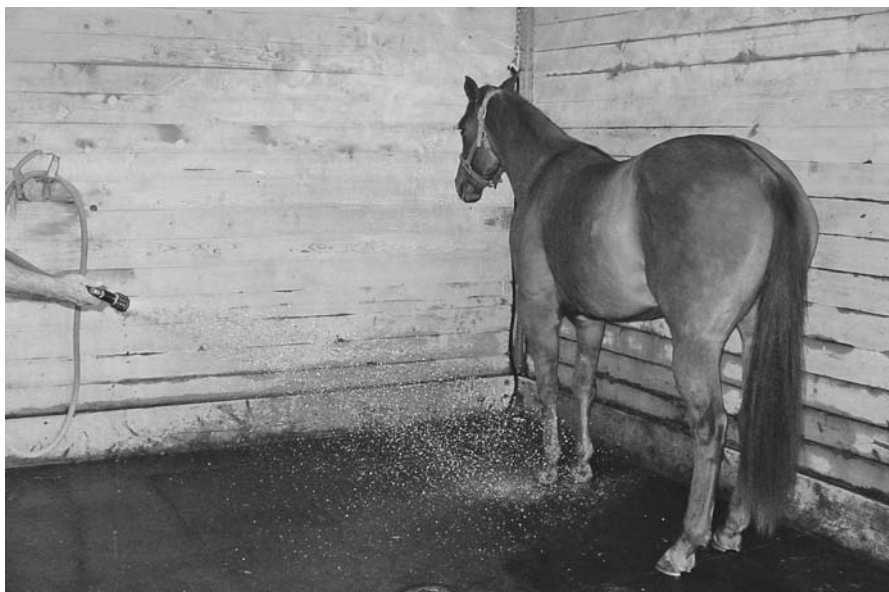
We have a three-sided, enclosed bathing area at the ranch, all cement with rubber mats, and a drain in the center. Jaz did not like that drain at all! She was not explosive, but she backed away from it and did not want to go in the wash area after she had seen it. She was very nervous and it was clear this needed to become a focused training exercise. So I used the same approach as I do for trailer loading or crossing objects: I do line work. I direct the horse and then give the go-forward cue. I directed Jaz toward the wash rack opening and then cued her to go forward. Normally I would do the change-of-direction exercise if there was enough room, but since there was not, this is what I did. While holding the line, I stood at her left shoulder and directed with my left hand for her to step into the opening of the wash rack. If she wouldn’t go forward, I would tap her with the dressage stick. If she took a step forward, I would stop tapping to release the pressure and she would take two steps back. I would tap again so that she would move forward two steps. Once I got her in, I stopped and let her relax. This pressure and release exercise allowed her to increase her confidence and familiarity. With Jaz this took about five minutes, but with other horses it has taken me up to thirty minutes—it really depends on their emotional level.

Teaching horses to be bathed (meaning to stand quietly and accept water on them) should always be viewed as a training exercise. Some horses take right to water and others are terrified. Jaz was somewhere in between. She did not panic, but nor did she want much of anything to do with it. So I started the water and pointed the hose at the floor about 10 feet away from her front hooves. She was still nervous, so I moved the end of the hose to about 12 feet away. At that distance she relaxed so I turned the water off as a reward. After a few seconds, I turned the water on about 11 feet away from her, and the instant she relaxed, I turned it off again. We did this for several minutes, and I never turned the water off until she calmed and stopped moving, even if just for a second. I very slowly moved the hose closer and closer to her front hooves. Eventually she allowed me to put the water on her front hooves, then front legs, then we moved to back hooves and legs; next came shoulders, stomach, back, and then hindquarters. I was consistent in releasing the pressure of the water for her when she calmed down, while also maintaining the water contact whenever she was moving. Eventually she was quiet and accepted the water no matter where I sprayed, and we ended there. I did *not* work on her face. That's a lot of pressure for most horses.

Gradually she will be taught to be hosed off around her head and face, but there was no point in putting that much pressure on her for a first bath. For the



Start the water well away from the horse at first.



Move the water closer to the front feet and legs.

next two or three baths we can make sure she will remain comfortable and relaxed, meaning she's not moving around, stiffening up, or spooking in place, and has no concerns. After this we can teach her to accept the spray of water all over her face. When doing this, use a very soft spray of water and put a cotton ball in each ear so that water doesn't go down the ear. Also, when you use shampoo later on, get a type that does not sting or irritate the eyes.

Depending on the personality or emotional level of your horse, it may take several training sessions for this to happen. But for the most part, about 98 percent of the horses we teach will accept the water if we are consistent. We will cover how to school them for being sprayed on their face and head in upcoming months, though it's basically the same method. This initial bathing session took about forty minutes of pressure and release work with the water, but ended up being a great training session—we really had a good breakthrough by the end.

Whenever possible, I do teach horses to bathe outside first. When outside, it's easier to allow them to move because they are nervous, and then I just stay with them with the hose until they are quiet. Plus, they do not feel the extra pressure that a semi-enclosed area can cause, so it's easier on them to be outside in the open where the only pressure is from the hose. But it had been raining and all the outdoor areas were wet and the footing would have been bad for

me to try to stay with her as she moved. And I was not expecting her to react nearly as much as she did, so it was a good lesson for both of us!

A few other tips for initial bathing training: Start with medium water pressure and ideally with a sprayer that breaks up the water pressure to keep the contact from being too intense initially. Also, when possible, use tepid or warm water. If you must bathe your horse with cold water, use common sense. If it's a cold winter day, you wouldn't want to hose your horse down with cold water because it would take longer to dry, causing a chill factor. But on the other hand, if it's 20 degrees below and you are in a heated barn and your horse is clipped, you could use cool water and then put a cooler on her and she would dry quickly. In the Bay Area, when it freezes we put light blankets on our horses after bathing. If the horse hasn't been clipped, I might wash only the legs. Think of your horse as your baby. You would gauge the weather by how it feels to you and then bath and dress the baby accordingly.

Don't worry about shampoo or such at the beginning; just focus on getting the horse comfortable with the hose and water. Expect it to take several bathing sessions until she really relaxes and stands quietly for the water pressure. And remember, if you remove the water while the horse is fidgeting,



Work over the rest of the body. Go slowly with the suds at first. We are using a special shampoo (EQ Solutions) that won't sting or irritate Jaz's eyes.



Quit the lesson when the horse is standing quietly for an improved amount of time versus when starting the lesson. Some horses may need several training sessions. In Jaz's case, she is enjoying a good scrub.

pawing, or moving away, you are teaching her to do so. Last, if the horse does not tie well or has not learned to give to pressure, make sure that training happens prior to the bathing lesson. A tie ring and the post exercise covered in Month 3, "Preparing Jaz for Saddle Work and the Vet," is a great place to start.

Training Month 5

Jaz and Charles Take a Break

Over the last four months, I sat down near the end of each month to summarize all the training work I have done with Jaz in the prior weeks. Usually I have pages of notes and have to scramble around to decide what to include versus what may not be noteworthy. But when I sat down to work on this month's chapter, reviewing the training work I had done with Jaz, I realized I had done practically nothing!

Between a rare vacation with my wife, Anne; the birth of my first grandson, Vincent; and attending a horse exposition back east, Jaz had almost no formal training work in February. I exposed her to clippers, and we dealt with a food aggression issue. That was about it. However, this lack of schooling is not a setback of any kind. Training breaks do not have to be a problem. The training I am doing with Jaz over this year is supposed to be simulating what most folks can and should do with youngsters they want to start themselves. The advantages of doing comprehensive foundation training with a baby is that you *can* take your time and you really do not lose much with time off here and there if you have been methodical about doing the training as you go along. Most of us have periods in our lives when we can get very busy and the horse(s) may have to take the back burner for awhile.

But with a young horse, as long as they are getting plenty of turnout, good nutrition, and socialization, you should not worry if you have to go through times when you put the training on hold for a bit. When the training work resumes, you should discover that if you had done a good job by breaking it into small steps and being consistent, the horse will have retained most or all of the training work. It's likely that she will just need a quick reminder to get right back to where you were before you took a break. The key to success is to go back to the training exercises where the horse is very solid, and then move forward again from there.

So in the last month, Jaz had a ton of turnout time, often with other horses to play with, and she did get some basic reinforcement from my staff in terms

of being tied up at the hitching post now and then, and also got some basic grooming time. Part of the grooming early in the month involved exposing her to clippers; I'll talk about that shortly. Otherwise, she kind of had a vacation along with me and is definitely none the worse for wear. I have to say too that she is really growing and developing well. She's about 2 now, and even in the five months or so since she came to the ranch, she has really gotten past that gangly yearling look and the wonderful conformations of her sire and dam are really starting to come through.

Let's look back at what has been done with her so far: She is fully halter-trained and has learned to give to pressure very well. She leads, backs, and does several lunging and line work exercises. She ties and cross-ties. She is quiet for hoof trimming and baths, and she now accepts clippers around the face and the ears. Much of this training included basic de-spooking by its very nature. But the next step in her training, and what you will read about in the next chapter, will be the start of a comprehensive approach to sacking her out, or "de-spooking." We will be working extensively with objects such as tarps and plastic bags, poles, logs, and other things she will be asked to cross over. Getting Jaz comfortable with objects touching her all over, and also having her cross "scary" things while still listening and responding to me, will be the goal. I want to start raising and lowering her emotional level so that she learns to respond to my cues no matter is happening around her. We will also start working her with a cinch rope to get her accustomed to having the contact on her belly for later saddle work. Until then, let me share with you what I did do with her in the fifth month, during the little time that I worked with her.

CLIPPER TRAINING

Early in the month during our regular grooming session, I noticed my filly had grown quite a beard of whiskers. I decided there was no time like the present to expose her to clippers. Often it can take a few days to desensitize horses to clippers, especially around the face, so I intended to do at least the introductory work, with the plan of getting it finished by the end of the week if not sooner.

When I am first exposing a horse to clippers, I always start with a small, quiet cordless version, such as the type we might use for cleanups. There is plenty of time to get her used to the monster ones that are used for body clipping later. Remember, baby steps in everything, and clipping is no exception.

Step one is to let the horse see and smell the clippers while they are turned off. I put the clippers close to Jaz's nose. She smelled them, and I took them away again. I took a couple of minutes to move them toward and away from her



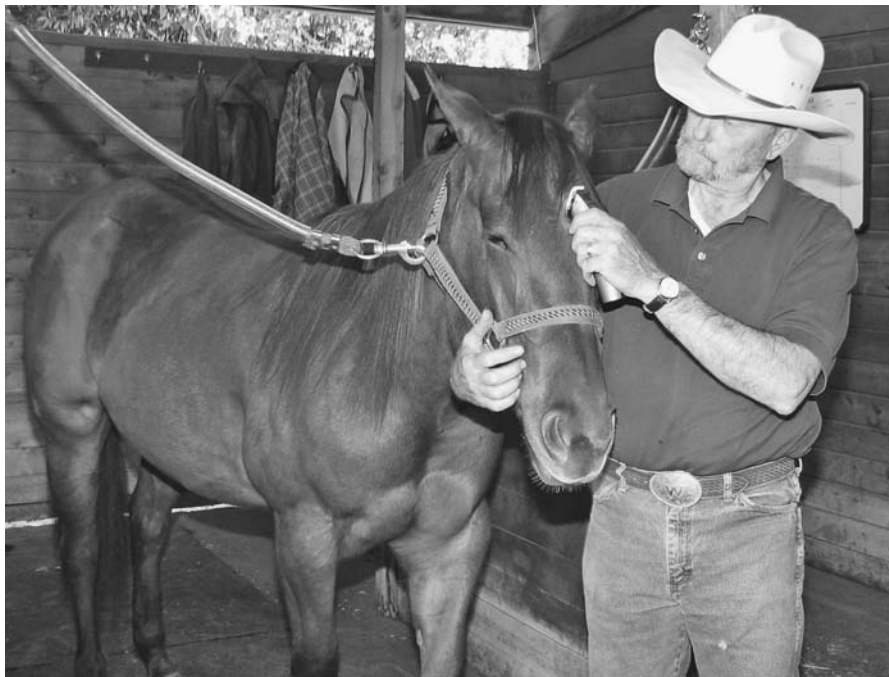
Start with the clippers off and allow the horse to see and smell them.

face while they were still off—again, just basic pressure and release. If the horse tries to back or move her head away from the clippers, do not release (take them away) until the horse stops moving or quiets, then take them away.

Jaz did not seem to care after smelling them, so next I touched her with the clippers all around her face and ears. Again, the clippers were still off. The same principle applies; if you are touching the horse and she's trying to resist the contact, do not release until she quiets. Then keep repeating, touching the horse with the clippers and taking them away when the horse is quiet, until you can touch the horse at will with the clippers all over the head.

Within about two minutes, Jaz was quiet and allowed me to make contact with the clippers anywhere I touched her. Remember, we have been doing regular grooming and bodywork with this horse, so a lot of preparation has gone before this actual exercise. I would have been very surprised if she reacted strongly to the clippers while they were still off since she has been exposed to so many grooming aids touching her, though I also thought she would be more complacent about bathing, so you never know.

The real test typically begins once you turn the clippers on and they make noise. If your horse is on the emotional side, buy or borrow quiet clippers to



Next get the horse used to being touched by the clippers while they are still off.

start clipping work with. Once they are on, go back to step one, this time with the clippers running. I turned the clippers on and held them out away from Jaz where she could see them, but they were not in her immediate space. Because she did not react, I turned them off to reward her. If your horse reacts, keep them on until she quiets. Depending on how strong the reaction is, you may end up just getting the horse used to the clippers being on but while 5 feet away. Some horses who are very emotional become desensitized more quickly to the noise of the clippers if you try a different tactic. Hold the clippers out away from the horse and then turn them on and off rhythmically. Turn them off when the horse quiets.

In either case, end the lesson when there is significant improvement. So if turning the clippers on even a few feet away makes your horse jump around, end when you can turn the clippers on, still a few feet away, but the horse is quiet.

In Jaz's case, she allowed me to get the buzzing clippers right around her face without reacting. A few times I applied the clippers close to her, and then turned them off as a reward. Since she was still quiet, I took the next step and made contact with her face with the clippers, just holding them against her so

she could feel the vibration a bit. She pulled away slightly and I stayed with her until she stopped pulling and quieted. I then pulled the clippers away. I repeated this a few more times until she allowed me to press the clippers against her all over her face and ears without reacting.

All of this took only about fifteen minutes. She really was being remarkably complacent. Teaching a horse to clip is very straightforward, but it usually takes a couple of lessons at least until the horse accepts the noise and vibration. Jaz seemed so nonchalant I decided to go for it, and clipped her bridle path, her ears, and then those whiskers. She was just wonderful. I ended there, of course, but the next day out of curiosity I brought out my large clippers and turned them on around her. She looked at them and reacted a little bit when I finally placed them against her withers, but even then within a minute she was quiet. I think I probably could have body clipped her at that point.

For Jaz this was a very quick lesson, more proof for me of her good mind. But even with horses who react to clippers with fear, this is not a hard thing to teach; it just takes patience, consistency, and timing. Follow the steps I've outlined and take your time. If you never release the pressure of the clippers until the horse quiets (whether that means they are 5 feet away or touching the horse) and always release the instant the horse does quiet, I can promise you within one to several sessions you will have a horse who allows you to clip her without a problem—if you have done the previous work of teaching the horse to give to pressure and to be handled extensively all over her body and touched by various objects. Please do not pull out the clippers until those lessons are done.



Now let the horse get used to the noise and feel of the clippers while they are on.



Next thing you know, if you have timed the pressure and release work correctly, you will be clipping your horse like a professional.

FOOD AGGRESSION

One particular issue that came up last month that we worked through with Jaz was not a planned training exercise. She had started showing signs of food aggression while I was on vacation. By food aggression I mean that she was starting to pin her ears and rush the fence when she was being offered hay or grain. After she had been given it, she was territorial when someone walked by, sometimes seeming to charge at the person strolling near her paddock. She had not gotten terrible about it yet, but that's just not acceptable behavior on this ranch, and we wanted to nip it in the bud.

It is not uncommon for a horse to show aggression around feeding time. Signs of food aggression are pinned ears, running toward the gate or the fence, banging or kicking on the stall walls, or pawing at the ground. In our barn to cure this behavior we carry extra 2-quart buckets or cones with us during feeding time. When a horse sees the feeding cart go by and starts pawing to say, "Feed me! Feed me!" we throw a bucket in the horse's direction (but not *at* her). The idea is not to hit the horse or to hurt her, but to create enough excitement to thwart that thought. In other words, the sound and sight of the bucket hitting the ground or banging against the outside of the stall takes the horse by surprise. If you do this consistently enough you will be surprised at the change.

Here's an example. Four new horses came in at the first of the month and only one after two and a half weeks is still showing a little bit of food aggression (wanting to paw the ground). When she first came in, this same horse was lunging at the gate and banging on the walls. So this goes to show that if you are consistent with this training, you can have a whole barn full of horses with polite manners.

The way to correct this behavior is actually the same exercise to teach a horse to ground-tie, which is when you drop the halter rope or the reins of your bridle on the ground and the horse learns to behave as if she is tied up. The horse stops and stands. So if you want to teach your horse to ground-tie, these are the same steps to follow. It's also the same approach as for correcting any aggressive behavior in a stall or a paddock.

This exercise does assume that the horse understands and responds to pressure and release, which of course Jaz does. We set up a scenario where we had a lead rope handy when we went to feed her. Depending on how aggressive the horse is, you may want a dressage stick or a lunge whip available instead. Have the object of pressure at hand and as soon as the horse takes a step forward with ears pinned, or rushes the fence, use the rope or whatever to drive the horse back away from you or the object they are defending. In Jaz's case, I twirled the lead rope with energy toward her to drive her back. The key was that I did not release the pressure until she not only backed away, but *stood* there as well.



Jaz stands quietly. I am about 10 feet away.



Finally she patiently stands without contact on the line.

The progression is that you apply the necessary pressure to get the horse to back up. When she has backed away, release the pressure for the reward, but if she starts to step forward at all again, immediately reapply the pressure (twirl the rope or raise the dressage stick or the lunge whip). You can easily get into a nonproductive cycle in which the horse backs up but immediately comes forward again. She must be trained to *stand* after she backs up, to learn that she will be asked to work, to back again, until she *stands still*. Because of their short attention span, you ask babies just to stand for a few seconds. Then over time you ask for them to stand still for longer and longer periods.

Jaz learned she would not get fed until she was standing back away from the fence quietly. She also learned that if she rushed the fence when someone walked by, she would be driven back and asked to stand away from her food until she was quiet again. As I say all the time, in order to change their behavior, horses need a reason they can understand. Being kept away from food and having to back up (which they generally do not like) are reasons they can understand. Plus, having a horse who knows how to ground-tie is always wonderful, so this is just a good lesson to do anyway. Even if your horse is not food aggressive, just move into a round pen or a confined area and practice some ground-tie training work with your horse. Have the rope or the dressage stick ready, and if she takes a step forward, back her. And just keep at it until she stands. Then after she is standing still consistently, you will practice moving

away from her, a step at a time. If your horse is pretty connected with you, she often likes to follow. But again, drive her back until she stands. Over time you can practice having her stand longer and then also with you walking farther and farther away while she remains standing. Most horses quickly learn that the lead rope or reins on the ground means they stand still (and get a break).

A tip for more energetic or forward horses: Work on this lesson *after* line work or round penning when they will be more willing to stand.

One last note: I've already talked about the need for teaching your horse to respect your space. You also want them to do this when you are standing, holding them when haltered, or tacked up. Ideally they should be several feet away from you. This same exercise can also be used to teach the horse to stand away from you while you are talking to someone or waiting for something. If the horse comes into your space, drive her back and make her stand still. If she moves forward when you take a step away without having cued her for movement, drive her back again. The principle and application are identical.

Otherwise, this is really all I did with Jaz this month. And after holding my grandson, Vincent, in my arms, that's just as it should be.



Training Month 6, Part 1

De-Spooking: Jaz Overcomes Her Fears

Five months of training work have passed, and it is now windy and wet March. Jaz has become beautifully halter-trained and also very light, which means she understands giving to pressure. This has been a busy month! The first half of the month, covered in this chapter, I concentrated on doing de-spooking exercises with Jaz, in addition to doing line work. The de-spooking exercises conditioned her to stay focused even under added pressure that raised her emotional level. For the second half of March, which I'll cover in the next chapter, I introduced Jaz to a saddle and a bridle.

The point of emotional control work is to condition the horse to give to pressure no matter what is happening around her. So whether in a parade, on the trail, at a show, on a windy day—no matter what the external stimulus your horse is getting, she has learned to give and to respond to your cues. You create this safety and responsiveness by focusing on her emotional level through a series of exercises that takes advantage of the mental and physical aspects to desensitize the horse to fear.

It is critical that your horse really understands “giving” before you up the ante by asking her to listen and respond when she is afraid. So make sure that your horse is forward, consistent, and light for all the line work; stopping and starting when you ask, as soon as you ask, before you introduce elements of de-spooking.

De-spooking and sacking out are basically the same idea. The term “sacking out” has been used for years, since it literally began with using a gunnysack (a grain sack made of coarse material). The horseman would use this sack to de-sensitize a horse to external stimuli. Since gunnysacks are not available, I use an empty LMF paper grain sack, a tarp, a plastic bag, and a rolled lariat for de-spooking; all these tools accomplish the same thing. “De-spooking” has become the more common term, encompassing the whole range of emotional control work.

WORKING WITH A TARP

I typically begin de-spooking work with an inexpensive 10-by-12-foot blue plastic tarp. Many trainers have come to recognize what a great all-around training aid a tarp can be. The goal of this exercise is to get the horse to stand on a fully opened tarp. To reach this goal you need to break this exercise into steps. It's important to begin by making it very easy for them, so I always start with the tarp folded up into a square that is about 20 by 20 inches, which the horse perceives as much less of a threat than an opened tarp.

Five steps are involved in training a horse to cross the tarp:

1. *Do standard change-of-direction line work.* Put your horse on a 12- to 14-foot lead and start with the standard change-of-direction line work that we discussed in previous chapters, using a lunge whip or horseman's cane.
2. *Set the stage.* Put the tarp on the ground at the farthest point from you so that the horse will either go between you and the tarp or over it when you ask her to go in a circle. Make the tarp narrow enough that if your horse is very fearful, she can easily jump over it. The goal of this exercise is to ask the horse for the stop and to change direction *at the farthest point away from the tarp at first*. This will be the most comfortable for her.
3. *Add pressure to get the desired result.* Cue your horse to go forward at a nice energetic trot—no walking or jogging. When your horse nears the tarp and balks at it, keep cuing until she either goes between you and the tarp or over it. Do not allow her to go around the tarp at the farthest point or stop and go back the way she came; this is a bolting action and cannot be allowed. If your horse stops and tries to go back the way she came, change the reaction by stopping her feet immediately and bringing her back to the direction you want her to go. Even though she did not go over the tarp, you actually taught her through pressure and release that it's more uncomfortable to bolt away from it. The idea is not to punish your horse for this behavior but to make her think twice about doing this.
4. *Stop and change direction.* Next, stop your horse at the farthest point from the tarp. Pause for a minute to reward her, then pick up and ask her to change direction and go over or near the tarp from the other direction. What typically happens is that the horse will at first balk, or run between you and the tarp, jump over it, and finally start crossing it,

by bolting or jumping over, then slowing to a more controlled canter, then a trot, and then she will finally walk over it.

5. *Reward for progress.* Your job as the trainer will be to recognize progress and reward it. You will see signs that the horse's emotional level is dropping when you start to notice that the horse is moving more casually (rather than being frantic), and certainly if you see any signs of licking or chewing. Also, as the horse stops jumping or avoiding the tarp and is making more contact when crossing it, you are making good progress. Always let the horse stop, sniff, and paw at the tarp if she wants to; it will greatly increase her comfort.

As you continue the exercise, begin asking the horse to stop and change direction closer and closer to the tarp each time. Imagine that the circle your horse is moving on is like the face of a clock. The tarp is at six o'clock and your horse is now moving clockwise and stopping at twelve o'clock. When you see signs your horse is relaxing, ask the horse to stop at one o'clock. Change direction there, go back over the tarp, and stop at eleven o'clock. Change directions at eleven o'clock, go back over the tarp, and stop at two o'clock. Continue on this way until you can stop the horse at either four o'clock or eight o'clock. The eventual goal is to get the horse to stop and pause close to the tarp, have any feet touching it, or stand right on top of it. Even if your horse does any of these things by accident, you should release the pressure *immediately*. Most people



I let Jaz inspect the tarp.

make the mistake of standing there and waiting. Only a moment's hesitation is enough. When you have accomplished this, you have completed the exercise successfully. How long this takes will vary tremendously with different horses.

For the next phase of this exercise, unfold more of the tarp to make it bigger. How much you unfold it depends on the emotional level of your horse. If you have an emotional horse, you may have to unfold the tarp in very small increments.

Ask the horse to stop and change direction closer and closer to the tarp again each time. When you get the results you want with this size tarp, go to the next increment, working the horse with a larger portion of the tarp. Continue on this way until you get the horse to stand relaxed on the fully opened tarp.

Jaz's reaction surprised me. In the beginning, she would try to jump over the tarp, and I had to work with her for about twenty minutes before she was willing to accept it and was standing fully on the tarp pawing at it. In fact, because she had accepted it, I unrolled the tarp and did the next exercise with half of the plastic. You would never want to do this unless you are sure the horse is ready, but once Jaz had accepted that tarp, she was very nonchalant about it.



She checks it out from both directions.



She is comfortable standing on it with her front feet.



Practicing ground tying on the tarp.

I have had horses in training who were so terrified of the tarp that I needed to start the line work 50 feet away from where the tarp was on the ground, and then very slowly work them closer and closer to it, and sometimes not all in one day. It's the same approach, the change-of-direction line work getting closer and closer, but you have to move at the horse's speed of acceptance and in the event that you have a very emotional horse, you do not want to push her too hard or fast. Wait for signs of progress and a lowered emotional state before you move closer to the object, and stay at that until you see progress. And do not quit the exercise until you see significant progress.

What is significant progress? This varies on the temperament and emotional level of the horse. For example, any improvement of 50, 75, or 100 percent on a good-minded horse with a low emotional level is significant improvement. However, in horses with high emotional levels who are not as good-minded, significant improvement may be 10 to 25 percent. So if your horse was high as a kite 50 feet away from the tarp and you got her to be relaxed working 2 feet or closer to the tarp, that is significant progress.

INTRODUCING A PLASTIC BAG

As I said earlier, Jaz's reaction to our first tarp exercise surprised me. Next, I placed a plastic bag on a dressage stick, lunge whip, or horseman's cane and approached her with it. She reacted calmly as expected to the bag when I held it near her body. However, when I placed it near her head she started striking out in response and when I held it near her feet she really lunged and struck out at the bag. Again this really surprised me because of her good nature. This just reinforces what we talked about earlier: that a horse is going to be a horse and you cannot always predict her reaction to something. I have had horses who did not have Jaz's good nature but could care less about a plastic bag. I think Jaz reacted this way because she was a pasture-raised horse who had basically no handling up until I got her last fall. She was still in strong survival mode, which is the fight or flight instinct. So Jaz was only protecting herself.

Similar to wild mustangs, horses living in enormous pastures in a herd tend to develop a much stronger fight or flight instinct than horses who are handled regularly as babies. The difference in a horse like Jaz, compared to a wild

mustang, is that she has been bred specifically for a good working attitude, so it's much easier to get past the hurdles of that instinct. However, Jaz felt threatened when I started to work the bag around her head/face and legs. On the rest of the body she was fine, but the bag in these areas represented a confrontation to her, and it was the confrontation that she was reacting to, not the bag itself. This behavior is just a survival mechanism, and it does not mean you have an aggressive or bad horse in any way. As I have said many times, Jaz has a wonderful disposition and it's just another behavior to address through training. Babies are much more prone to it since they have not been gentled, but once they have, it does go away. I had about 75 percent improvement in her reaction in that first session alone after about twenty minutes of working with her.

The plastic bag exercise is another fundamental in pressure and release. I tied the plastic bag on the end of the lunge whip (where it looks and sounds scary) and then approached Jaz with it reaching out from my hand. As I said, Jaz was fine with it near or touching her, except for around her head and feet. So I touched her nose with it lightly, and even when she was reacting by striking and backing up I did not take it away until she quieted (even if just for a second) or when she stopped striking. I would pull it away then as her reward, and after a pause, reapply the pressure of the bag on her nose until she quieted, and then release the pressure. You might have a horse who reacts like Jaz when you touch her anywhere on her body—that bag may represent a form of pressure that really scares her. So it would be the same thing no matter where you were applying the pressure—reward her for quieting, and otherwise maintain the pressure or contact of the object until she gives you a reason to release. The more you do this—and not just with bags, but with a huge variety of objects over time—the more desensitized your horse will become to many situations. This also serves as great safety training for when things happen such as a saddle slipping or a dog or a child running up to a horse. Anything that helps transform the horse's reaction from striking (or reacting physically) to quiet acceptance instead will really make your horse so much safer overall. But again, how long this takes will vary depending on the horse's emotional and mental aspects, so really try to find that balance of ensuring you have made significant improvement without pushing the horse too far.



This series of photos shows the progression of the de-spooking exercise using a plastic bag. The first touch is on her nose.



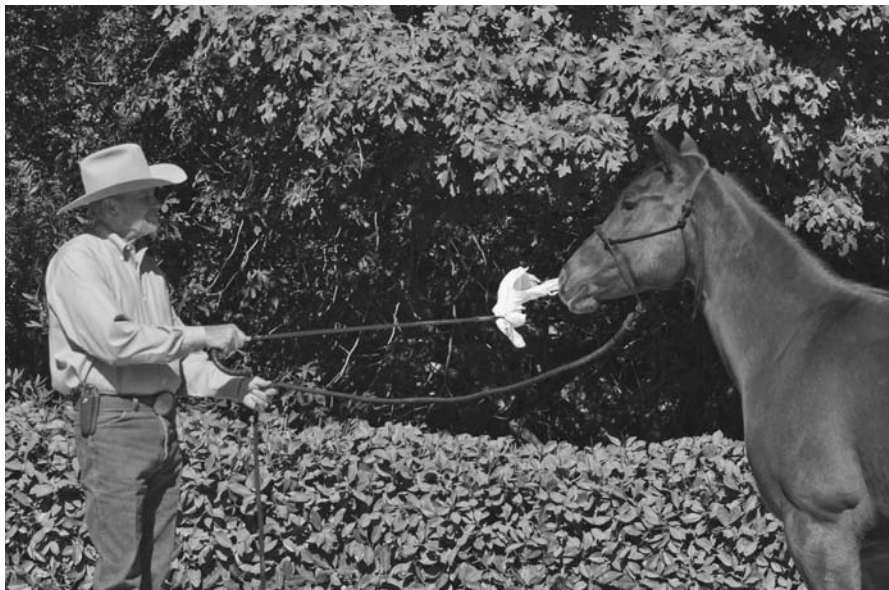
She reacts by striking out at the bag.



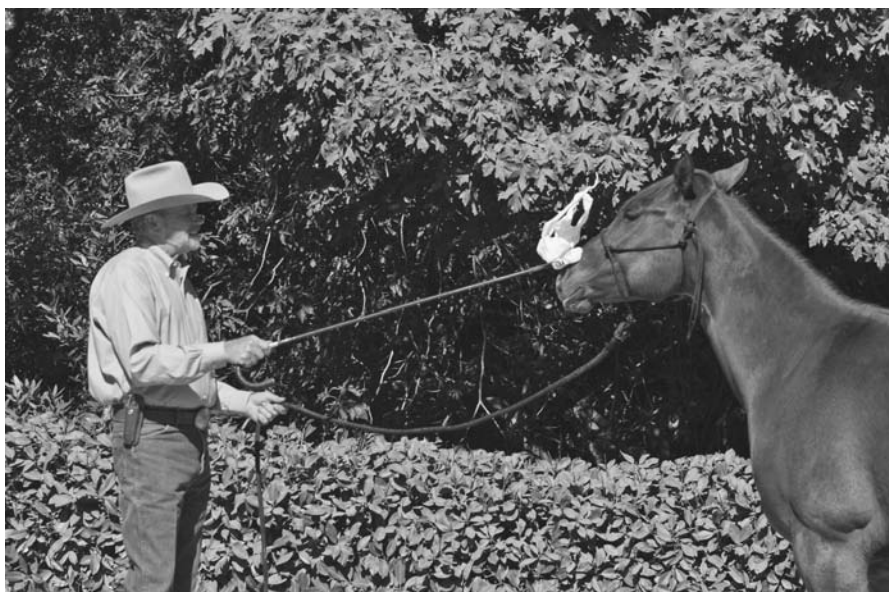
Finally, a bit more comfortable.



I kept working with her every week. Note that she is quiet even though the bag is larger.



Later, after more work.



Keep at it and be patient.



Standing quietly on a loose line with the bag flapping over her head.

WORKING WITH THE TARP ON A LINE

Another exercise I do is to drape a tarp on the line while doing change-of-direction work in a round pen. I really created this exercise by mistake and have been doing it ever since for the last ten years. I was doing line work with a horse in a round pen and there was a tarp on the ground. When I got the horse to stop her feet, the slack in the line caught the edge of the tarp and lifted it up, which really scared the horse. I couldn't just leave the horse scared, so I had to fix it with this exercise. This lesson is good preparation for those times when your trail rides take you through brush that rubs against your horse's legs. Because the horse is a prey animal, this sensation triggers the feeling of being chased.

Jaz was pretty complacent about the tarp on the rope; it took about thirty minutes until it was unfolded completely and draped over the lead line while we were doing the change-of-direction line work. But I have also had many horses with whom I had to work over several sessions on this exercise in order to get them relaxed. Know your horse and work at her pace.



Start with the tarp folded up on the lead line.



Work until the horse is comfortable and not pulling.



Let the tarp drag on the ground.



She has started to really relax here.



Unfold the tarp so it is open and flapping.



Don't be surprised if you get a reaction!



Let the horse get used to the tarp even closer to her face. She has not relaxed yet and line is still taut.



Once the tarp has dragged quite a bit and the horse is relaxed during the exercise, give her a pat and end the session.

Before you do this exercise, make sure you have worked with the horse crossing the tarp. Also, if possible, do this exercise in a round or square pen. This keeps the horse more confined so you don't have to worry about the horse pulling away from you.

When the horse is complacent going over the tarp and being touched by it, you can fold it up small and drape it over the lead line close to your hand. A tarp folded in a small square will not flap or make a lot of sound. Start your line work this way with the tarp very small, and keep asking for circling, stopping, pauses, and direction changes until the horse is relaxed, consistent, and listening with the tarp draped over the lead line. Then unfold the tarp a bit more, making it

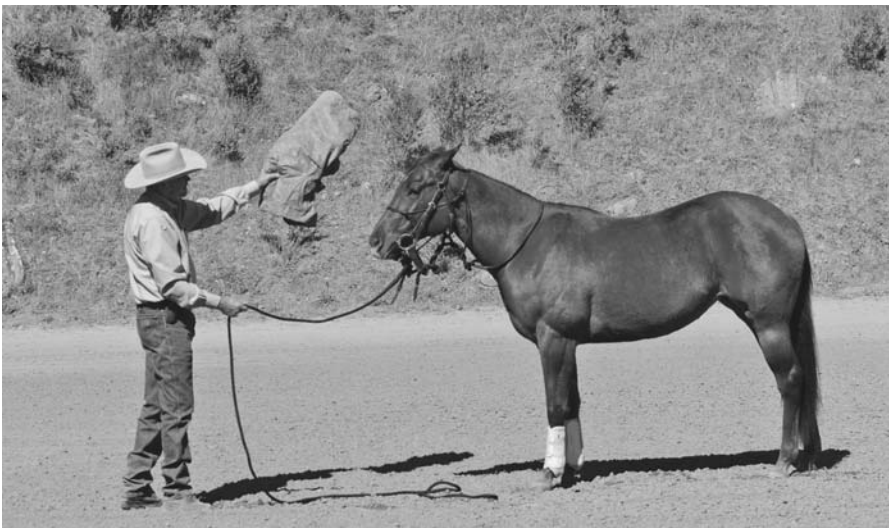
larger to drape over the line. Again, how fast you go at this and how big you make the tarp should depend on how emotional your horse is. Do not put too much pressure on your young horse. Take your time and work up to it.

If your horse bolts and looks like she is getting faster and faster, you should stop her feet immediately to take the pressure off. If you don't, she will accumulate so much speed you will have a major wreck on your hands, which means that she may try to go through the rails or try to climb out. If you feel you can't stop her feet, let go of the line. The rope will slip right through the plastic tarp.

SACKING OUT WITH A TARP

To begin this exercise, fold up the tarp to about a 20-by-20-inch square. Sack the horse out with the folded-up tarp, touching her everywhere on both sides of her body: nose, neck, shoulders, hindquarters, legs. When the horse is relaxed with this lesson, open the tarp up to the next size and sack it everywhere on the horse's body again. Continue sacking out the horse this way in increments until you have completely unfolded the tarp. Then sack out the horse with the full tarp, rustling and flapping it against your horse on both sides of her body.

After this, refold the tarp again into thirds and drape it over your horse's back while she is standing. When your horse relaxes, open up the tarp more and drape it over her back again. Your final goal is to open up the tarp fully and cover your horse with it like a blanket.



Getting Jaz used to being covered by a tarp. First, touch her with the folded-up tarp.



Unroll the tarp so it's larger and covers more body mass.



The tarp is open and flapping.



Touch her neck and withers.



Work around the head.



Work over the head.



Drape it over her back.



Work the tarp back up over her head.



Jaz is totally relaxed and covered by the tarp.

Once you have finished this exercise you can move onto the next one, which is to put a tarp on your horse and then move her forward.

LAST STEP: LEAVE THE DRAPED TARP ON AND MOVE HER FORWARD

Some people get discouraged with this next exercise because the horse is fine with the tarp draped over her, but she becomes emotional when she moves and the tarp starts bumping her in unaccustomed areas. I consider the horse becoming emotional with this exercise as a good thing because when the tarp drops, it slides off her rear end and flaps around her back feet. I started doing this exercise because I have been put into positions where my saddle slips and gets around the rear legs. So I try to do as much de-spooking around the leg area as possible. Also, this exercise prepares the horse for when it starts to rain and you need to put on a raincoat, or if you fall off and your foot catches in the stirrup. When you can get a horse to be focused on you and relaxed while there is a noisy flapping tarp moving around with her at all times, then you know you have done some great emotional control work.

Asking the horse to go forward, stop her feet, pause, and then change direction—all with the scary distraction of a tarp on her back—really helps condition her to listen to you and to be mentally focused even when feeling highly fearful. The usual key to success applies: Depending on how emotional your horse is, you need to start slow and work up to it in small increments.

With Jaz I took baby steps. I folded the tarp into a long, narrow rectangle and put it on her back with each side coming down equally. I did change-of-direction work. Then I unfolded it, did more line work, and kept at it until it was largely draped all over her while she was working.

To do this exercise, place the folded tarp over the horse and do standard change-of-direction line work. Most horses typically have a fairly emotional reaction when asked to move forward. They shoot off, and because the tarp is just lying on their back, it falls at their feet. This usually causes them to jump and bolt away. When this happens, stop the horse immediately, replace the tarp on her back, and continue change-of-direction work. Move her forward again and do more change-of-direction work. Keep repeating this exercise until your horse is relaxed and listening to you.

Before doing this exercise, make sure you have sacked your horse with the tarp (see “Sacking Out with a Tarp,” earlier in this chapter) and have worked with your horse crossing a tarp.



Be creative! Here Jaz stands quietly in the breeze and noise created by a leaf blower.

GETTING CREATIVE WITH DE-SPOOKING

Once you get these exercises out of the way, you can have your horse drag tarps around, putting tarps between the legs. There are easily a dozen variations of terrific de-spooking exercises you can do with your baby using a tarp and basic pressure and release work.

Another de-spooking exercise I did with Jaz was to have a remote-control car go buzzing around her feet. This was really an interesting lesson for everyone! She actually got pretty comfortable with the car around her but then the operator drove the car too close to her and she struck out and stomped on it. Up to that point Jaz was fine, but the operator made an error in judgment and pushed it. Instead of listening to me, he made an assumption that the horse was fine with the car. This is an example of how we should take our time when doing these types of exercises and do them in increments.

Once you have gotten these wonderful introductory de-spooking exercises completed, you can look at next working your horse in the same fashion around baby carriages, balloons, balls, bicycles, other animals . . . the possibilities are unlimited. While you will never desensitize her to everything, the more work you do to change her response to fear from flight or fight mode, to simply “spooking in place” at worst, the more safe you and your horse will always be.

So get creative, ask friends for help, and start using pressure and release work to expose your baby horse to anything you can think of that she may react to.

Training Month 6, Part 2

Jaz Wears a Saddle and Bridle

It is now two weeks into March, and I am working to prepare Jaz for her first ride in April at the Equine Experience held in Paso Robles, California. I did a series of exercises to prepare her for a saddle blanket, a girth, and finally a Western saddle. Once she was ready to pack a saddle, I did change-of-direction exercises with her on the ground until she was relaxed. I also introduced Jaz to the bridle and did giving to the bit from the ground exercises to prepare her for when I get into the saddle. For Jaz, I use an offset D-Ring snaffle.

GETTING A SADDLE THAT FITS

The one thing I see a lot of at the clinics I do at my ranch and on the road is that many saddles don't fit properly. I believe this happens because many people do not understand that saddle trees come in different widths and horses come in different widths. A saddle tree—the wooden frame covered with either fiberglass or molded plastic on which a saddle is built—can come in two or three different sizes. Many times I see saddles that are too small for the horse, which means they are pushing into the shoulders and pinching, or they are too wide and are dropping down on the withers. At the ranch, I have seen people come in with saddles they bought because they were on sale, and when they try them on their horse, they don't fit and they have to sell it and buy another one. So before you get a saddle for your baby, look for someone in your area, such as your veterinarian, or at a horse expo who is knowledgeable about saddle fitting. The rules for fitting a saddle are the same whether you get an English or a Western saddle.

Also be aware that even if you buy a proper-fitting saddle, the fit can change. Some English saddles are adjustable, but Western ones are not. A couple weeks before her first ride, I put a saddle on Jaz and she fit in a certain size tree. Then she started filling out and got wider so I had to go to a different saddle with a

wider tree. Next, she developed higher withers and needed a saddle with a narrower tree. The bodies of young horses are changing constantly (for example, their top lines change depending on the amount of exercise you do with them), so you will need to continually monitor the fit of your saddle. Your horse could go from a semi Quarter horse tree as a 2-year-old to a full Quarter horse tree as a 5-year-old.

If you have any doubts about how a saddle fits, look at it on your horse. If it looks horizontally straight on the horse, that's a good sign. Also put your hand up under where the bars lie on the horse. If it is tight in the front and tight in the back but there is a huge gap in between of an inch, then you have four points of pressure and it is not resting on the horse properly. If you are not sure how the saddle fits, get someone who is knowledgeable to help you assess it.

PREPARING FOR SADDLING

Before you saddle your horse you can desensitize her to a saddle blanket or a pad and a cinch. The belly especially is a highly sensitive area on your horse. Out in the wild the legs and the belly are really vulnerable areas. It's a very tender zone, and horses are naturally nervous about contact around their stomachs. Horses have a natural inclination toward being cinchy—resistant to being cinched—so it's our job to help them feel comfortable and confident when cinched up for riding. I believe that about 80 percent of horses have issues about being cinched. Signs that a horse has a cinchiness problem are pinning her ears, eyes getting bigger, head going up, showing her teeth, and turning her head toward you to bite.

Most riders want to tighten the cinch in one step, so they really bear down on them. What I teach at the ranch is to tighten a cinch in three stages. First, at the cross ties or hitching post, tighten just enough so that if the horse shakes the saddle won't slip off. Second, after you walk the horse away from the cross ties, tighten it again. Third, when you get to the arena or the trailhead, tighten it for the last time. When you tighten the cinch for the final time, don't over-tighten it; as a general rule, it should be loose enough for you to slip three to four fingers between the cinch and the horse's belly. I find this is the most comfortable for horses.

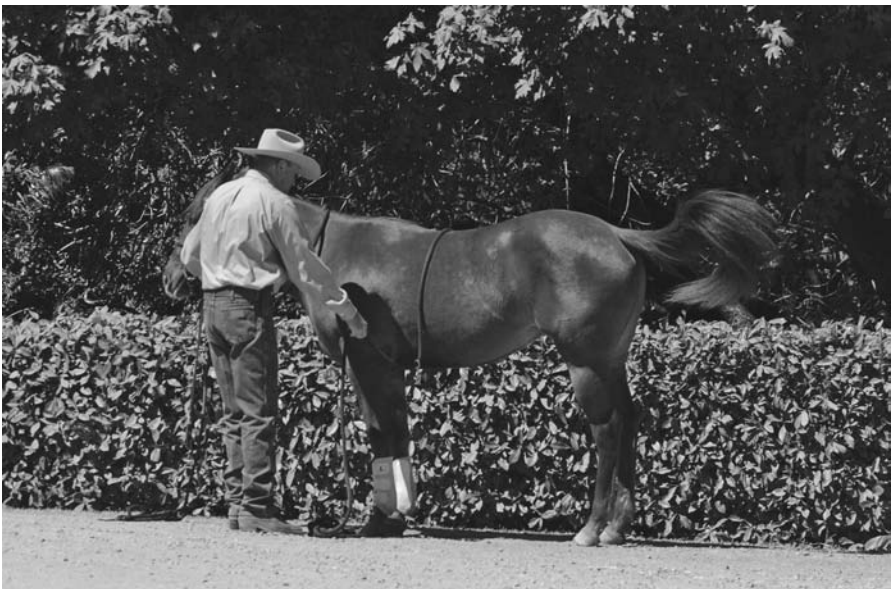
Jaz didn't exhibit a major reaction to cinching—she didn't buck in place. But a couple of weeks later when she began packing a saddle around, she started getting negative about cinching. We had to go through the cinch work again, and get her through this until she started reacting positively to it and not negatively. So, you may have problems from time to time with cinching. If you do, go back to these exercises.

Two different causes can make a horse cinchy. I find in general that this behavior comes up more with mares than with geldings, probably because of hormonal issues. I also find that some cinching problems are due to the saddle not fitting properly. I have seen horses get really ugly when you try to cinch them up because the saddle is putting pressure in the wrong places and causing them pain. At the mere suggestion of cinching them up they would almost flip over backward. But when we put a proper-fitting saddle on these same horses and cinched them up, they hardly batted an eye. So, as I said earlier, make sure you take the time to check that your saddle fits your horse properly.

THE ROPE CINCH EXERCISE

This next exercise desensitizes your horse to the feeling of pressure caused by a cinch tightening and loosening around her belly. The rope cinch exercise allows you to prepare your horse for cinching without the added weight and pressure of a saddle. For this exercise you need a 25- to 30-foot line with a snap on the end to create a rope cinch.

Attach a 12-foot line to the halter. With one hand, hold your horse and stand across and slightly in front of your horse's shoulder. With your other hand, place the snap end of the 30-foot line over the back of your horse. Use a



Loop the rope around the horse and the cinch area.



Tighten and release when the horse relaxes.



Repeat until the horse is relaxed with the rope tight.

cane to reach the snap and bring it under her belly. Thread the other end of the rope through the snap to make a cinch but don't pull the rope tight.

To start, do a rhythmic quick pull and release of the rope until your horse starts to relax. Don't pull and then wait for the horse to relax and then release. Just pull, release, pull, release, quickly and with minimum pressure. And even though your horse may be cranky, don't release—just keep doing this. After a while your horse will be less intimidated by the exercise and start to relax. When the horse is relaxed, you can fine-tune the type of reaction you want by holding the rope until you see a better result, such as the horse stops fussing for a moment.

As your horse gets comfortable feeling the rope tighten and loosen, you can increase the rope's tightness, making the pressure maybe a pound or so of contact weight. Tighten . . . relax . . . release. Continue increasing the contact and pressure until you are at the level of tightness with the rope that you would be with your cinch.

This exercise may take anywhere from three to five or more sessions until you see your horse staying relaxed when you tighten the rope cinch. If you are consistent and release the cinch pressure at the right times, it will go a lot quicker.

SACKING OUT WITH A SADDLE BLANKET

If you have done all of your de-spooking work earlier, then sacking out with a saddle blanket should not cause a horse to overreact. The horse should be fairly relaxed; if the horse is spooking and jumping away from the blanket, it means that you need to do more de-spooking training.

This exercise is similar to sacking out with a lightweight plastic tarp (see Month 6, Part 1: "De-Spooking: Jaz Overcomes Her Fears"). However, don't

skip it. This exercise gets your horse used to the feel of something heavier on her back because a blanket weighs more than a tarp.

To start, attach a 12-foot line to the halter and start with the blanket folded to a very small size. Hold the line with one hand and stand in front of your horse's withers. With your other hand, sack out your horse with the folded blanket touching it on the neck, shoulders, back, and hindquarters on both sides of the body. If the horse moves off without a whole lot of energy, stay with the horse until her feet stop or ask her to stop with a backup cue to get her feet to stop. In case of a little bit of reaction, there is an easy solution. Because we did change-of-direction exercises earlier the horse knows that cue, so you can



Sacking out with a saddle blanket.

change hands and hold the blanket up toward the other side of the horse. For example, if the horse is moving off to her right, hold the blanket in your left hand to block her. You should also think about whether you are applying too much pressure if she's moving off. We don't want the feet moving in this exercise, but if your horse does move, you can block her to stop the movement.

When the horse is relaxed with this exercise, unfold the blanket more and sack out again. Continue sacking out the horse this way in increments until you can completely unfold the blanket, lay it on the horse's back, and the horse stands relaxed.

WORKING WITH A SURCINGLE

You don't have to do work with a surcingle; you can go straight to a saddle, which I have done. A surcingle is a leather or nylon strap that fastens around a horse's girth area and is usually used for lunging. It has many rings attached, running from the rib cage up to the withers area, so that you can add other training equipment to it, such as side reins. One reason I like working with a surcingle is that the horse feels a little bit of pressure around it before you put the weight of a saddle on. Going from a rope cinch to a saddle is a big step. The rope doesn't weigh much but a saddle represents weight. A Western saddle weighs about 30 to 45 pounds and an English saddle about 20 to 25 pounds. I find you can get a different reaction from horses when you transition from the rope cinch, to a surcingle, to a saddle. So the surcingle adds an additional training step, which is a good thing.

After you have done sacking out with your saddle blanket and you have done the exercise with the rope around her middle, you can use a surcingle to



Using the horseman's cane to safely reach for the cinch the first time.



Tighten and release the surcingle as we did with the rope.

simulate the feel of weight on her back and pressure around her middle by doing another series of pressure and release exercises.

Again attach your horse to a training line. Place the saddle blanket on your baby's back and the surcingle over that. Attach your girth to the surcingle. Like the rope exercise, do a series of tightening and then releasing exercises until the horse is relaxed. Start with minimum pressure and work your way to medium, to making the cinch as tight as it would need to be for you to be riding in the saddle. Remember to repeat this process in small increments like you did with the rope exercise until your horse is calm and not reacting.

Next, do change-of-direction work on a line with the horse wearing the blanket and the surcingle. This gets her accustomed to the new feeling around her back and belly area when she moves around.

Give your horse the go-forward cue. When you see her relaxing, stop her feet. Repeat this until your horse appears calm and focused on you.



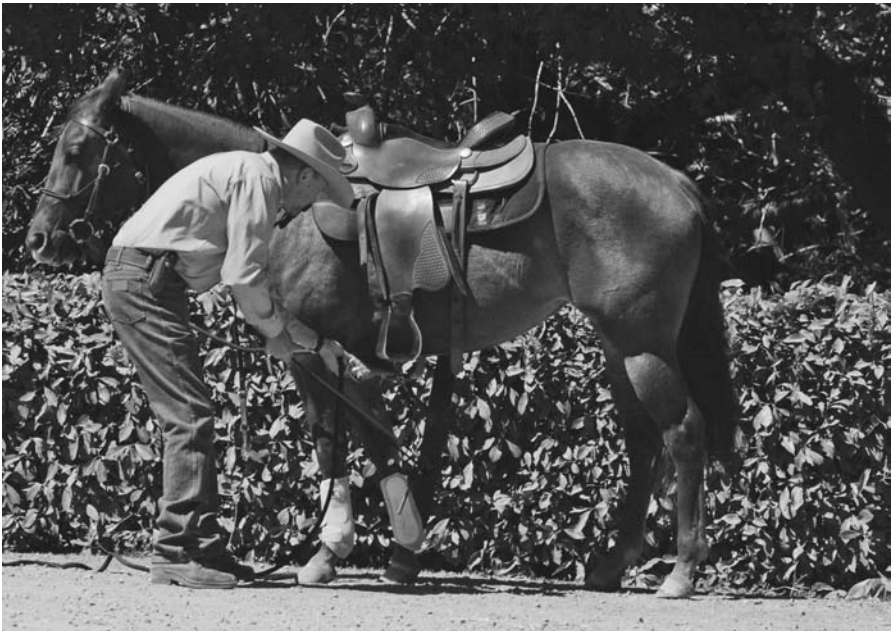
Doing change-of-direction exercises with the surcingle.

DESENSITIZING YOUR HORSE TO A SADDLE

In this exercise, you are trying to accomplish two goals. The first is to get your horse used to the feel and the sound of a saddle being put on and taken off her back. Plopping a saddle on your horse's back is a frightening experience for the horse, akin to being attacked. If you take your time when doing this part of the exercise, the horse will get over her fears and learn that this thing isn't something to worry about. Your next goal will be to desensitize your horse to putting the saddle on and then tightening the cinch.

Spend some time doing pressure and release work with the saddle coming on and off. If your horse displays some reaction to the saddle on her back, leave the saddle on and then remove it as soon as your horse quiets, even if just for a second. You can also try working with a lighter saddle initially.

Your next goal is to get your horse used to tightening the cinch. The most common problem I see when people are teaching their horse to accept a tightened cinch for the first time is that they tend to do one of two things. They either try to tighten it too much, too soon (not working up to it slowly enough), or else they inadvertently release the pressure of the cinch when the horse is moving around or reacting to the pressure of the contact, instead of getting the timing right and releasing *only* when the horse is quiet. I cannot tell



Follow the same steps as you did working with the surcingle.



Do change-of-direction exercises with the saddle on until the horse is comfortable.

you how easy it is to do the latter without meaning to! First you must recognize when the horse has quieted, such as if she raised her head with anxiety and then dropped it down. Next, your timing must be quick enough to immediately reward the horse for this good behavior by loosening the cinch. This takes a lot of practice!

I mention this so you can be aware of it when you are working on this with your own horse. If you see your horse has a tendency to be cinchy as you school it to be saddled, make sure you are not overtightening, and with the goal of impeccable timing in mind, keep practicing tightening/loosening exercises a lot until your horse stands quietly while being cinched.

Your last goal is to do change-of-direction line work with your saddle on your horse so she can get used to it. An unbroken horse may buck the first few times because she is bothered by the feel of the saddle and the banging of the stirrups against her sides. Just keep up the line work and round pen work as you did for the tarp exercises until your horse starts to relax and focus on you.

JAZ WEARS HER FIRST SADDLE

As I've said before, one of the reasons this training so far with Jaz has been largely straightforward (meaning not a lot of serious issues to work through) is because she is just a naturally good-minded and willing horse. That's the reason I selected her, and it continues to pay off. It really can be a good investment to purchase a well-bred horse.

Earlier in the month we have been working with objects around Jaz and having her cross tarps and other objects. I was doing a lot of standard pressure and release work with anything she found fearful. I did this to work up to handling her with ropes all around her body. This allows you to use one of the ropes as a training cinch, to help get her accustomed to the feeling of that tighter contact around her stomach in preparation for saddling. In conjunction with this, I started working with objects on top of her back, such as tarps and saddle pads, in order to desensitize her to something "scary" sitting over her back.

The first time you saddle a horse you just never know how she will react. I was expecting Jaz to be pretty easy, but once in a while you get a surprise. If you have done a lot of the sacking out ahead of time, it should not be a big deal, but again, you just never know. Jaz certainly had gotten a lot of work to expose her to a lot of contact with various objects on her back and stomach. And sure enough, when the day came that I put the saddle on her back, she was just fine!

Because Jaz was so nonchalant about the saddle on her back, I went right to the exercise of tightening the cinch for the first time. This is where it does tend to get tricky for many people (and we all know how common cinchiness can be), but because I had worked so much with ropes around her stomach, tightening the pressure and releasing only when she was still or quieted down, when I cinched her up she did not react. Because of all the foundation work we had done, Jaz was as complacent for the cinching as she was for being saddled, so I took her out to do some groundwork with the saddle on. Ninety percent of babies are like Jaz and don't overreact.

We did some line work and round pen work with her saddle on. She had a small reaction but no large bucks. With some horses you may have to work several times with the saddle on before they quiet down. Over the rest of the month, I worked Jaz under saddle from the ground every training session just to get her comfortable.

The end result of my work this month is having a horse who is very used to a saddle, and, while saddled, is moving her feet when I ask, in the direction I ask.

BRIDLING

Another important lesson I did with Jaz was to put a bridle with a snaffle bit on her during her training sessions. People often write to ask me how to get a young horse to accept being bridled for the first time. Like everything else, preparation is the key to success, and if you have done the work, it's rarely "dramatic" when the time comes. Because we spent literally months not just working Jaz with a halter, but also doing a ton of desensitization work around her head, face, ears, and mouth, when the time came to bridle her, I had only to place it on her head and then use a thumb to open her mouth and slide the bit in. This worked easily because she was already used to everything except the bit in her mouth. I use a custom-made sweet iron snaffle bit that I designed, which helps to get them mouthing on it as well. Bits are commonly made of stainless steel, cold-rolled steel, and nickel or copper alloys. I like the cold-rolled steel because the oxidation that occurs on the bit tastes sweet to the horse. This sweetness causes the horse to salivate more. When a horse is salivating, she's moving her tongue and has a relaxed lower jaw, which means she is accepting the bit.

When you first put the bit in, you want it over the top of the tongue. However, most horses play with their tongue and it gets on top of the bit. So I

like to adjust the bridle a little tighter than normal to prevent this. If I pull the bit up in there, the horse is less inclined to get her tongue up over it. This usually works 99.9 percent of the time. Usually, after ten or fifteen minutes of working with the horse and occupying her mind, she starts to forget about that awkwardness in her mouth. When the horse starts getting quiet about it, you can loosen the bridle.

What is the correct adjustment for a bridle on a horse's face? Well, you can talk to fifty different trainers and they are going to tell you fifty different ways to adjust it. You may hear that seeing one wrinkle where the upper and lower lips meet is good, or two wrinkles are good, or three wrinkles are good. What you want to do is look at the size of your horse's mouth. Every horse's mouth is different, just as every human's mouth is different. I myself have a normal size jaw, but my lips are small, so if I were a horse, I would probably need to have three wrinkles showing in the corners of my mouth for the bit to lie in there properly. If your horse has bigger lips, you may need to have hardly any wrinkles showing.

Once you put the bit in, the best thing to do is to open your horse's mouth to see where the bit is lying. Since you have been doing all the preparation work for bridling—playing with the mouth—this should not be difficult. First, let me give you a little lesson on what's inside your horse's mouth. Inside a horse's mouth are the front teeth and molars. The space between the front teeth and the molars (which is about 1½ to 2 inches long, depending on the size of the horse) is called bars. Your horse may have wolf teeth along the bars. Wolf teeth are smaller than premolars and are remnants of teeth from prehistoric horses. Through evolution they have gotten smaller. If your horse does have wolf teeth, I recommend removing them because they could cause painful bumping by the snaffle bit or pinching of the horse's skin between the wolf teeth and the snaffle bit. Have your veterinarian or equine dentist examine your horse and tell you whether removing the wolf teeth is a good idea.

When you check the bit, you don't want it so low that it bumps the wolf teeth or incisors, and you don't want it so high that it bumps the molars. Theoretically, when we are actually riding, we want to work the snaffle so that when we first pick up on the reins our goal is to develop a feeling of just working the corners of the horse's mouth. The next amount of pressure on the reins will work the tongue, and if you add more pressure it will go right to the bars. When training a horse, no matter how light your hands are, the horse may resist the contact and you may have to match the pressure on the bars. But your goal should be to work only the corners of your horse's mouth.



Here's an example of a horse salivating with a bit.

I like to see a horse packing the bit or holding on to it like a pacifier. What this means is that I want the horse so comfortable with the bit that she actually uses her mouth and tongue to pick it up and draw it into her mouth—she is holding the bit. This is ideal.

The other thing I like to see is the horse salivating, getting foamy around the mouth. When they see this, many people say, “Oh my God, what’s that?!” but this is a good thing. Jaz does well with this. Within five or ten minutes of working, her mouth gets really foamy. One of the reasons it does is because I use a sweet iron bit that has a tendency to rust and a lot of horses like that. I also use a sweet iron with copper inlay, which also helps to promote salivation. Nickel-plated and stainless steel bits can also have the same effect for horses who naturally salivate a lot. But most of the time, these types of bits don’t promote saliva production. Salivating is good because it means the horse is comfortable with the bit and keeps the mouth soft and moist. Without it, the mouth is dry, and dryness can cause a bit to chaff at the mouth corners; it also may cause the horse’s mouth to gape.

To put the bridle and bit on your horse, hold the bit in your left hand and grasp the top of the bridle with your right hand. Raise the bit into position by lifting the bridle up with your right hand and guide the bit with your left hand. Work your left fingers into the outside corner of her mouth into the bars. When your horse opens her mouth, slide the bit into the mouth and with your right hand pull up the bridle. *Don’t bump the horse’s teeth as you put the bit in!* Lift the bridle up over her ears gently.



Placement of the snaffle in the left hand.



With the right hand holding the headstall and the bit in the left hand, bring the bit to the mouth.



If you have done your homework, the finger goes easily into the mouth.



And the bit is in!



Bring the headstall over the ears.



To take the bridle off, with your right hand grasp the bridle and slip it over your horse's ears. Hold the bridle up and allow the weight of the bit to draw the bit down. When this happens, your horse will open her mouth so that you can slide the bit out. Again, *don't bump your horse's teeth as you take out the bit*—it is painful, startles the horse, and can damage her teeth. She will also remember this uncomfortable experience and later try to avoid being bridled.



Take the bridle off over the ears and allow the bit's weight to draw it down and out without bumping the teeth.

YIELDING TO THE BIT EXERCISES ON THE GROUND

Because you have taught your horse landings and change of direction in a rope halter, you can do giving to the bit exercises, which teach the horse to yield to pressure instead of resisting. When you have resistance you don't have control. I do this exercise from the ground because in my opinion it is safer.

To do this exercise, attach the snap of your 12- to 14-foot line to the strings of the halter *and* to the snaffle ring. (I use an offset D-ring snaffle.) You do this because you are not making full contact with the bit. You are exerting pressure on the side of the face and the mouth. Twist the reins, getting them safely out of the way for line work, and secure them with the throatlatch.

Send the horse out at a walk first around you. Take the slack out of the rope, take a step back, and ask her to stop her feet. Don't jerk on the rope or pull on the rope, but let the horse come to the end and give to it. When your horse does this, you will feel a little bit of resistance, but remember that we are not jerking on her; we are just letting the horse come to the end of the rope.



Twisting the reins—getting them safely out of the way for line work.

When she stops her feet, she is actually going to be yielding to the bit. I only had about 5 pounds of pressure on the line with Jaz, but some babies are more on the resistant side and may need 10 pounds of pressure.

Keep doing this ten, twenty, or thirty times until you barely take the slack out of the line and your horse starts to yield.



Three positions to work with doing the ground exercises: around the rear, over the saddle, and around the horn.

THE HIP EXERCISE WITH A ROPE

Another exercise I like to do is called the hip exercise with a rope. Because you have done desensitizing exercises with a rope earlier, your horse should be comfortable with ropes around her hips and legs and not be startled. For this exercise, saddle your horse and attach a 12-, 14-, or 25-foot line to your halter and bit as I explained in the previous exercise.

This lesson teaches your horse to yield to pressure (give her nose) and follow the direction of the pull. This translates in the saddle to picking up a leading rein, which means the nose is giving and the right front foot is following the direction of this rein.

So to begin, if you want the horse to give to the right, attach the line to both the bit and the halter on the right side. Then take the rope across her body, around her hindquarters, and step so that you are at a 90-degree angle from your horse. For safety, make sure you are standing at least 5 feet away from her hindquarters. Then take a step back to add a little contact. The horse will either yield or resist. Most likely the first four or five times the horse will resist; if this happens, maintain the contact. If the horse gives her nose (yields), stop putting pressure on the line and then pick up again and wait for the feet to come and then release the pressure. You will probably have to do this a few times before the horse yields and follows the pull of the rope. Some Arab horses are like rubber bands where their nose can come all the way down to their hip before their feet move. So you may have to hold a horse like that until you get her feet to follow the direction of her nose.

Everyone should understand the concept that instead of the line being attached to the bit, try to visualize that it is attached to the foot. So when you are stepping back and drawing the line toward you, it's drawing the right front foot and causing the horse to step in a lateral direction. If you do this correctly and do it enough times, the horse will start moving in the direction of the pull and start pivoting on the right rear hind foot.

The mistake that can come out of this is that you stand in a fixed position, in which you end up drawing the horse into you and the horse can't complete the turn. So here is the correct way to do this. As the horse starts to turn, maintain pressure by moving with the horse but always standing across from her left hip. Continue the pressure on the line, until the horse has turned around and is now facing you.

Some horses may achieve this in six or seven times like Jaz, who acknowledged after a while, "Yeah, I know this." It may take others ten or fifteen times. This exercise is especially good for schooling older horses if they are numb to

the bit—a term that sounds like they can't feel the pressure when in fact they can but are ignoring or not responding to it.

MORE ROPE EXERCISES

Another exercise I like to do is to lay the rope across the saddle at a 45-degree angle because it simulates your hand position when you are riding the horse. As in the previous exercise, you are looking for the nose to bend and soften and for the right front foot to step over. Do this exercise as much as needed until your horse understands what you are asking.

The next exercise after your horse masters the previous ones is to take the rope across the saddle at a 90-degree angle. This exercise is even closer to simulating a rider's hand position in the saddle. For 80 percent of the horses, you may only need to practice this exercise two or three times. This exercise has a 60 percent carryover into the saddle if you do it correctly.

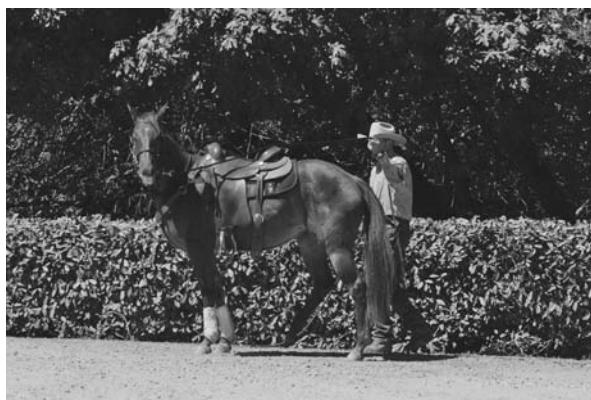
With the rope attached to the snaffle and the halter, you can also teach the horse to give with a nice bend in the body while doing concentrated circles, just as we taught the horse earlier in the halter to go forward with a nice bend and both eyes on us then. To do this, take your hand in the direction of the hip. When the hips move over, pause and ask the horse to back up. Once the horse is backing up and her feet are moving freely, you can also ask her chin to give in the direction of the chest. Because the rope is attached to the snaffle and the halter, there is not a whole lot of direct pull on the corners of the mouth and the bars, so it is a lot easier on the horse.



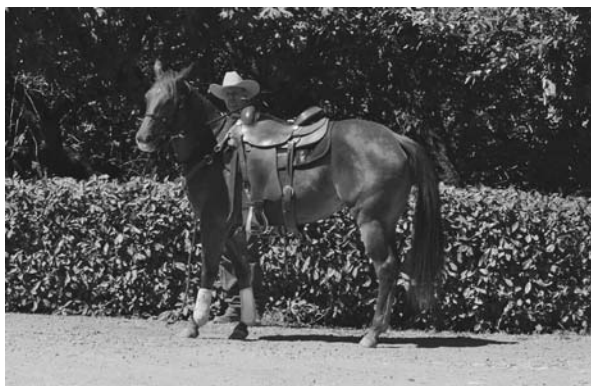
Jaz gives to the rope pressure.



Jaz steps around.



She gives to the rope pressure over the saddle.



Same exercise as over the horn.



She steps around following the rope pressure . . .



. . . And turns to face you.



Same exercise over the saddle . . .



. . . And she gives to the pressure.



Doing tarp work with the saddle. This adds another element of training to saddle work on the ground.

Training Month 7, Part 1

Jaz in the Round Pen

This April with Jaz has been both very busy very and exciting. Over the last month, I have continued to do a lot of work with her in de-spooking and to get her listening and responding to cues even when she is feeling very emotional. The result of all this work has really paid off and we have accomplished some major goals this month. The first half of April was spent getting Jaz relaxed and working with her full attention on me in the round pen, which I cover in this chapter. For the second half of April, which I cover in the next chapter, we worked on getting in the saddle and having that first and second ride. And in my case, Jaz's first rides were done in front of about 2,500 people with all sorts of distractions going on!

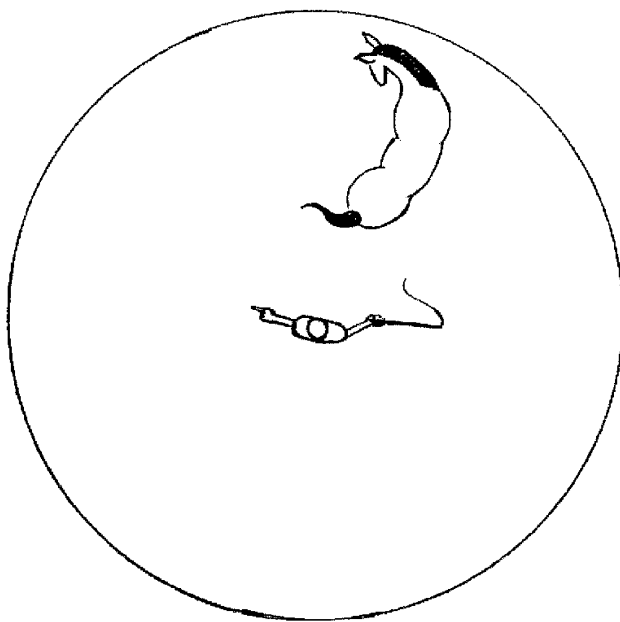
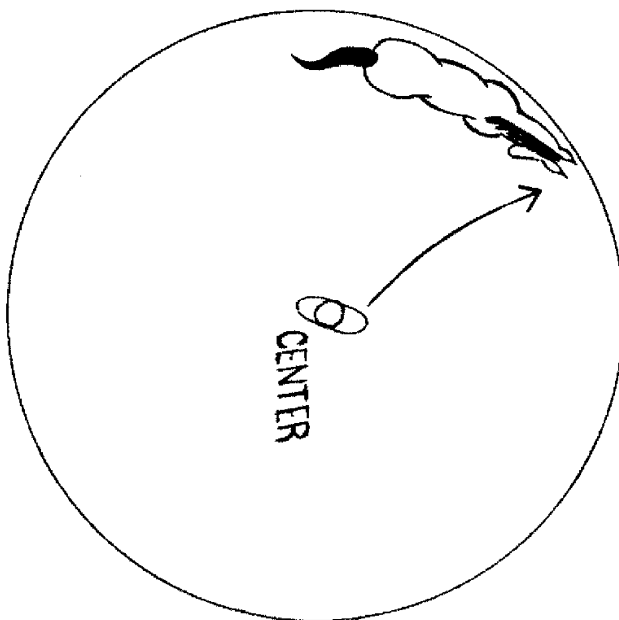
BACK TO THE ROUND PEN

You may recall that when I first got Jaz she was very fearful in the round pen initially and actually tried to go through the panels. Round penning is usually one of the first types of exercises I do with any horse, but when the weather gets bad we do not use the round pen at my ranch because the footing cannot be maintained. Since we had a wet winter in northern California this year, only in the past month have I had the opportunity to try working with her again in the round pen.

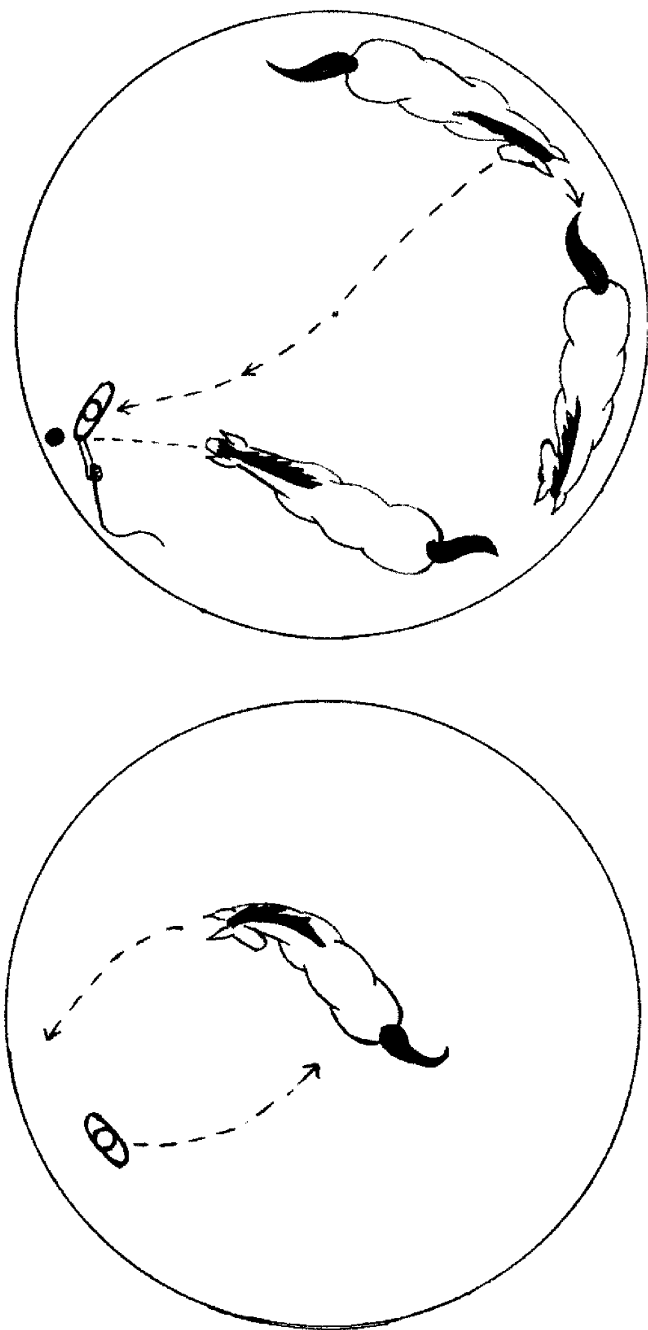
ROUND PEN LOGIC

Before I outline the actual exercises I did with Jaz, I will talk about round penning “mechanics” a bit, meaning the whys and the whats. First, I will continue to tell anyone who will listen that you do not need a round pen to do a great job training horses. The analogy I use is this: I used to have an old Ford truck without air conditioning. It got me to the valley just fine but it was always hot and uncomfortable inside. When I got my new truck, it also got me to the valley just fine, but it was a lot easier and more comfortable getting there because of the air conditioning. So what this means is that you can get the same results with line work, but it will be a little more work on your part, and it may take a little longer. Yet ultimately by doing only line work at the end, you will get the same respect and connection from your horse. I myself have started many horses without a round pen.

The primary value of the round pen really is not the physical exercise it allows us to get done with the horse; it's the mental and emotional work we can accomplish. The round pen should never be about running a horse into the ground, though we can certainly use her movements to work either with her or against her. Since a horse's movement is tied directly into her natural disposition (herd dynamics and flight instincts), we use the movement to work with the mental and emotional aspects. The round pen facilitates this by offering us a safe, confined area that naturally encourages forward movement. The horse cannot get away from us, and in a well-constructed round pen, it is very difficult for the horse to get hurt. A round pen also allows us to be safer as well. Because the horse has a large perimeter to run—to express her fear via the flight instinct by continuing to run—she is much less likely to try to charge over us. The simple fact is that the pen being round makes the job easier. Yes, you can work in a square or a rectangle, but those corners are natural spots for the horse to want to stop, and to get caught up. It can be done, but it takes a lot more time. The flowing line of the round pen promotes forwardness by not offering the horse an obvious point to stop. It becomes easier to get and keep the horse going forward. The circular nature of the round pen also gives you the ability to work the horse easily with figure eights, inside and outside turns, and of course the cue to “come to me.” These mental, emotional, and gymnastic exercises are all critical to prepare any horse for riding.



This diagram shows the simple progress for an outside turn: using pressure to move the horse away from us by stepping into the direction she is heading, since she wants to turn away from us.



This diagram illustrates the series of steps for both the horse and the handler in executing an inside turn.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ROUND PENNING

As you plan to start round penning your own young horse, it's good to line up the right tools to get the job done. Some equipment choices really help make the round pen more effective. Basically the equipment can be anything that supports your ability to use pressure and release on the horse to get the response you desire. Some commonly used tools include

- A horse lariat that is extra soft and at least 30 feet long
- A soft lead line—similar to a lariat but much softer and with more give and at least 30 feet long
- A lunge whip

The lunge whip often gets a bad rap, but in reality any of these tools can be abusive or overused. Employed without regard for rewarding via release, *and* without good timing to boot, any of these can “dull” a horse. The intent of these tools is identical: simply to drive the horse forward, to gain energy in her feet. The lariat and the soft ropes are pitched toward the horse's hips to drive her forward. The whips are used behind the horse to drive her forward. Frankly, I use a lunge whip because it feels closest to a natural extension of my own arm, and I can also make it “pop” (the cracking sound) to help drive a really lethargic horse (a horse with a lot of stop and no go). The thing is, these all work; it's just about moderation, using only as much pressure as you need to get the horse to respond and never anything more than that. The amount of pressure you use depends on the personality and emotional level of the horse. If you have a very forward horse, meaning she has a lot of go and is nervous, many times just slapping the ground with a lunge whip is enough to get the horse to move forward. But if you have a lethargic horse who has learned not to move forward, you might have to reach out and touch her, which means you snap her in the lower hindquarters to motivate her. The important thing with this type of horse is that you get a reaction from her. If you don't, you will have to keep snapping and snapping, which just irritates her and ultimately makes her duller. So make sure if you have to make contact with your horse, it motivates her enough so that she jumps forward.

An important consideration is the size of the round pen, especially if you are planning to install your own. I personally don't like anything bigger than 60 feet. I seem to lose the connection and control of the horse because she is farther away from me, plus it can be a lot of work. It means I have to move around more. Sixty feet seems perfect, especially with a big horse. The round pen at my ranch is about 55 feet. I am finding that the older I get, the smaller

I like 'em! Don't go any smaller than 50 feet, though; that really crowds the horse and you start to lose a bit of the safety of the bigger pen.

For footing, I recommend 3 to 4 inches of a light to heavy sand. Anyone who tells you that footing is not critical does not know much about horses and long-term soundness. To keep the base fluffed up and aerated, groom the ground as often as you can with a tractor or an all-terrain vehicle that has a dragging device attached. Add 20 percent moisture to the footing by watering it. Less moisture than that will cause the arena to be dusty; more moisture than that will make it muddy and slippery. Horses can go lame otherwise. As extra protection I use high-quality support boots, usually just on the front legs. Training a young horse to accept the boots can be worked into your hoof handling sessions and general de-spooking work around objects and physical contact that I covered in the previous month.

I also suggest 6-foot panels on your round pen, especially if you are working with young, unhandled horses or with mustangs. A horse in major flight mode or panic will try to go over a 5-foot panel, often injuring herself in the process. The extra 12 inches to upgrade to a 6-foot panel seems to eliminate that added risk.

There are obviously many benefits in having a round pen to make your job easier. But again, most of the exercises I did with Jaz loose in the round pen this last month, I had already done on a line with her, except for outside turns. So as we go through these, if you do not have a round pen, just know that you can still do the key training exercise.

JAZ WORKING WELL IN THE ROUND PEN

I had left off with Jaz and the round pen months before, and was working her on a line in the round pen just trying to get her to focus on going forward rather than trying to escape. My goal was safety for her, and trying to get her to relax enough to be looking to me for direction. Now I was curious to see what would happen. Since she was so complacent about so many things, would she still exhibit fear in the round pen? The answer was no.

I am sure that was largely as a result of all the emotional control work I did with her over the winter months; by the time we came back to the round pen, Jaz was relaxed and trusting. Since I had been doing extensive line work asking her to go forward, stop, and change direction, it was an easy progression to do this off-line now.

The basic goals of my work with Jaz in the round pen the last several weeks have been to get her to go forward consistently when asked (she was already good at that), to learn to do outside and inside turns, to stop when asked, and



Jaz in the round pen on a line for the first time.

to perform smooth figure eights. I wanted her attention on me, and I wanted her to be relaxed at all her gaits and not frantic. When you are first teaching a young horse to go forward in the pen, do not worry about which gaits she is doing. As long as the gait has good energy, it makes no difference if your horse trots or canters (see the following section, “Round Pen Rules”).

The initial exercise with Jaz was to teach her outside turns in the round pen. Every two or three laps I would step in front of her to ask for an outside turn. I did this over and over. She would run a couple of laps, I’d step in front of her to get the outside turn to reverse her direction, and then let her do another couple of laps before changing her direction again. The outside turn is best to begin with since it is the most natural reaction for horses—it’s in tune with the flight mechanism and their desire to turn away from the source of the pressure. This, of course, is even truer with very emotional horses.

The progression of asking for an outside turn is to use pressure to move the horse naturally away from us, and we do this by stepping into the direction the horse is heading (I call it closing the door), thereby having her want to turn away from us. We can use a lunge whip or a lariat to enforce pressure in the direction we want the horse to head, and begin to use our hand to point in the direction we want our horse to turn—this becomes a pre-cue.

So as Jaz would be coming around, I would step from the center of the round pen to be in front of where she was heading and also point the whip out



Jaz moving nicely on the line, still in her wooly winter coat.

in front of her to provide additional incentive (pressure) for her to move away from me, while also using my other hand to point her in the direction I wanted her to go. As I repeated this exercise in both directions, she began to anticipate what I was asking and within a short period of time, I no longer needed the whip raised as extra pressure. Within a few sessions over the period of a week, I could take just a small step or two toward her, and she understood that I was asking for an outside turn.

Especially for those of you who will start your training in a round pen before line work, the outside turn is an important first step in getting directional control. However, within a reasonable amount of time you will want your horse to be able to do inside turns as well. For that, once the horse is solid on the outside turns, you begin to step away from (rather than in front of) the horse to create a nice open door; that is, you provide an opening that gives the horse enough comfort to move toward you to perform a turn. Once the horse starts to come into you, you will position your body to drive her forward again and back to the rail.

To do inside turns with Jaz, I stepped way back from the center to create a big open door for her to come in toward me. I kept my body language soft so

that she felt comfortable moving toward me. Once she was coming inward, I stepped toward her to drive her forward in the reverse direction, which then completed an inside turn. Again, you can use your hand to point where you want the horse to go as well.

Just as with the outside turn, keep doing these every lap or two, and then as you progress over time, ask for turns every lap or even half lap, and you can alternate between cuing for an inside or an outside turn. The end result of these simple but powerful exercises is a horse who remains extremely focused on her handler, and is looking to you 100 percent for directional control. This moves you way up into a leadership position. I was controlling Jaz's space, feet, and directions while she was at liberty—that means I had captured her mind and respect.

ROUND PEN RULES

Here are some general tips when round penning your horse:

- When you are asking for “go forward” movement, ensure that the horse is moving at a solid pace for whatever gait you are requesting. Do not settle for lazy movement. Expect nice, consistent energy in the movement.
- This is never about running the horse into the ground, or making her so tired that she “gives in” to you. It is about controlling her mind. I don't care how much you run them down, these are enormous animals, and you will never gain control of their mind through abusing the body. It is fine to take occasional breaks to briefly let the horse relax during training sessions, but make sure that the horse is maintaining her focus and attention completely on you, even during the breaks.
- Reward for the “try.” The fundamental concept of foundation training (as always) is conditioned response to pressure and release. So if you see the horse trying, even just a bit, reward by the immediate release of pressure. It's all about subtle successes, small steps, and you can ask for more over time.
- If you ask the horse for an outside turn and get an inside one instead, or vice versa, immediately correct her and ask all over again. Cut the horse off if you have to, but keep at it until you get the type of turn you want (this is the part where you are likely to get a lot of exercise yourself until your horse puts it all together).

- The clearer you can make your cues and body language, the faster this will come together. Knowing when to execute the right timing of pressure and release, the faster she will learn all her schooling lessons.
- In any exercise program you must always account for the physical condition of the horse. People tend to like to spend a lot of time in the round pen because the work can often be very rewarding, especially for green trainers. You do not want to overstress a young horse's body, nor do you want to push any horse too hard physically. Consider the horse's overall condition before you start work in the round pen. Even for young horses who are fairly fit, it's a good idea to limit sessions to about twenty to thirty minutes while they are less than 2 years old.
- Include a lot of change of direction work, stops, and pauses, so the horse should not be running most of that time. If you have any doubt, start with perhaps a ten-minute session and work up slowly.
- Use your best judgment in terms of balancing the idea of ending only when there has been significant improvement against the physical well-being of your horse. This is your lifetime partner and if you are acting in her best interest then you are probably making the right decision about how long and how often to work her.

ROUND PENNING, STEP 1: GET YOUR HORSE MOVING CONSISTENTLY

When it comes time for you to round pen your own baby, take your time and try to follow this general progression. First, pick a direction. I always start off going left; I have no idea why and it really makes no difference. I want the horse to go left and to keep moving consistently. To get the horse going in the first place, you should be driving behind the withers to move her forward (opening the door). Being behind the withers asks the horse to go forward, whereas being in front of the withers will slow, stop, or cause the horse to move to the outside (closing the door). I try to stay at about a 45-degree angle behind the withers and use my whip, lariat, or soft rope back behind the hindquarters.

Usually a young horse will start off at the canter, but really, it can be any gait except the walk—anything that displays good energy and impulsion. You want to avoid having your horse stop and sniff about. In my case, we have been working Jaz on a line for a long time before coming back to the round pen, so



You want a nice, relaxed forward movement.

she already “gets” going forward and going forward consistently. But for those of you who are starting round penning as an initial exercise with your young horse, getting her going forward consistently is a serious effort in itself in most cases. I talked about this in Month 2, “Earning Jaz’s Respect and Teaching Her to Tie,” and it’s just as true on the line as in the round pen at first. A baby typically will move off pressure enough to go forward, but to go forward and to *keep* going forward are two completely different concepts for a youngster.

Be prepared to step in with additional pressure the instant you see any sign the horse is about to stop. The trick to getting this lesson done quickly is recognizing her intention and applying fresh pressure before she has actually stopped (and, of course, releasing the pressure the second she has re-engaged her forwardness). Depending on how emotional your horse is, this could mean anything from just having to raise your hand in the air to running after her waving a whip around. The same rule applies—do as much as it takes and nothing more. Typically first sessions on round penning are a lot of exercise for the handler, unless you have a very forward horse (a horse with all go and no whoa), then the trick becomes slowing her down.

Otherwise, your goal is to get your horse going forward until you ask her to change direction and/or to stop. Another tip is not to expect too much at first. Ask for maybe two to three circles before changing direction or stopping, rather than three, four, or five laps. And while you do not want the horse stopping unless asked, it is great if she starts to relax. Signs of relaxation



Making a correction. Round pen work may be a lot of work on your part!

are usually a gradual slowing of the gait—not laziness, just not bolting or being frantic. The horse may drop from a canter to a trot; that's fine. Also look to see what the ears are doing. Are they forward or back? Does the horse have an eye on you? Is the horse licking and chewing? These can all be signs the horse is relaxing and thinking about who you are, that person standing in the middle.

ROUND PENNING, STEP 2: ASK FOR A CHANGE OF DIRECTION

When you are ready to ask for that first change of direction, don't worry whether it's an inside or an outside turn. It does not matter.

Inside Turn

To do an inside turn, step way back and lower your whip. She may think you are asking for a stop and come in toward you a bit; when she does, change whip hands and drive her forward again in the other direction. Then you will have done your first inside turn.

So the steps for the inside turn are for you to step back, move away from the nose, and change whip hands; the horse starts to move in, then you step

back toward the center and drive the horse forward in the new direction. There is a myth about never looking the horse in the eye. Baloney. Clear intentions are all about your body language, and that includes good eye contact.

As you start to refine your techniques, you should try stepping forward (closing the door) in front of the horse to ask for the outside turn, and stepping back (opening the door) to ask for an inside turn. Once you can do both and really want the horse to look to you for leadership, start alternating these so she doesn't know what you are going to ask for next. That will really get her attention. The only tricky part with this is that you have to be consistent in following through. Once she knows the cue for each turn, if she does the wrong turn, you must immediately correct her every time. Otherwise, once she has mastered these, you can move on to figure eights, which is a wonderful physical and mental exercise.

Figure eights are very easy to do in the round pen once your horse knows inside turns. Have her go around you in a circle, then step back and have her come inside. Next you step forward and drive her off in the other direction. Then, as soon as she is at a half circle, step back again, have her come forward, drive her away at the opposite direction, and keep asking for an inside turn every half circle. It's kind of fun to do this on freshly groomed footing; you can see how consistent you are in asking for turns by the pattern that develops on the ground. Does it actually look like a figure eight? If not, you have something specific to strive for.



The sequence of an inside turn.



Get attention . . .



Turn the shoulder . . .



Drive the hip . . .



Move forward.

Outside Turn

Making an outside turn is about controlling a horse's space. To make an outside turn, get the horse to starting turning into you and crossing in front of you (as for an inside turn), step in front of the withers and drive the nose away from you into the round pen. This is done a minimum of 5 to 15 feet off the rail so that the horse does not feel confined.

Ask the horse to circle around you a few more times, step forward again, and ask for another change of direction. Your intentions need to be very clear. Keep doing the outside turns, frequently changing direction, until you see the horse is really starting to pay attention and is focused on you. Also, when you ask for a stop, watch to see if the horse is looking to you for the next command or if she is looking away, ignoring you. You will get her mind and focus by asking her to keep changing direction. You may make wonderful progress in a first session or it may take several sessions until the horse is looking to you and starting to connect. If your horse is looking at you, turning toward you when asked to stop, she is ready to do an inside turn. Those are signs she trusts you and respects you enough to come to you for leadership. If your horse is not doing these things or is walking in toward you, she is probably not going to give you an inside turn, so you should continue with the outside turn.

As I mentioned a bit earlier, you can easily overuse or abuse your training tools. You do not want to be slapping the whip continually. The more you use it, the less effective it becomes. I also like to use voice commands: cluck for trot, kiss for canter, strong "whoa" to stop. These all become pre-cues in early work and become the actual cues once the horse becomes lighter and well trained.



The sequence of an outside turn.



Turn the horse . . .



Drive forward . . .



Keep driving forward.

THE BENEFITS OF ROUND PENNING

Teaching your horse to round pen now will provide benefits later on in your horse's training. For example, you can work your horse in the round pen using driving lines (nylon, cotton, or leather lines at least 25 feet long with snaps on the ends) to teach her to give to the bit. You can also attach a rope that will drag behind her hindquarters and ask for an inside turn and then an outside turn that causes the rope to get tighter around her rear feet, which is a despooning exercise.

I have not talked much about what is often called the “connection” aspect of round penning. That's become another common marketing buzzword, which is fine, but I think it can make a pretty simple idea seem more mysterious than it really is. As I have said, when you control the horse's feet, you control her mind. Look at herds in the wild, or even in domestic pastures. The lead horse moves other horses around with a look, body language, or even by chasing them off. The spatial and directional control the lead horse has puts her into a position of leadership and respect, and horses love and trust those they respect. So the connection is simply when the horse has started to accept you as her leader. She looks to you for direction, comes up to you quietly for attention, and will follow you around when you move off—just like she would with an equine leader. It's really nothing more than that. It is absolutely what your goal should be, but please don't think you need some special “calling” or “connection” with the horse to have her connect with you. When you ask her consistently to move her feet and she consistently responds, you have become her leader. That's all there is to it. If you ask and she ignores you and you do not follow through, that's when you have a problem. And that happens a lot with novice trainers and owners, especially with young horses. Folks often get nervous about putting too much pressure on the horse and consequently do not use enough pressure, so the horse soon learns she can ignore you or walk all over you. The trick is to reach into your toolbox and come up with something that works every time, and do not quit until you find the right tool.



Making the "connection."



Following when you move off.



Connection made!



Now is the time to enjoy the benefits of work well done—Jaz gets a hug.

Training Month 7, Part 2

Successful First Rides with Jaz

At this point in Jaz's training, I believe she is ready for me to start riding her. I began her training seven months ago, and we have done a slow, steady pace of my Ultimate Foundation Training program. More than anything at this point, I really have just been fine-tuning her cues for directional control from the ground, continuing to sack her out with different objects and asking her to cross over objects, which will have significant carryover into the saddle once I start riding her.

IS YOUR HORSE READY TO RIDE?

Let me tackle a very controversial subject right up front: When is a young horse ready to be ridden? I get asked this question all the time, since people want to know when it's safe or "right" to ride their young horse. I wish I had a clear-cut answer for everyone, but in reality every horse is different and every rider is different.

You should always act in the horse's best interest. I advocate guidelines that you should consider a horse's readiness to be ridden the same way you look at every training aspect by evaluating the emotional, mental, and physical aspects of your horse:

- Is the horse emotionally sound?
- Is the horse mentally alert and paying attention to you?
- Is the horse physically in shape with the proper bone structure?

Let's take a closer look at each of these areas.



Jaz under saddle ready for her first ride.

Emotional Aspect

How is your young horse doing emotionally? How successful has the foundation training been in helping to ensure that your cues override her flight instinct? Are you still seeing a lot of signs of emotional behavior (fear), or is the horse fairly complacent in most situations? But most importantly, when her emotional level does jump through the roof, are you able to successfully manage it back down quickly and safely? Since safety is my number-one priority, I make it a practice not to ride a horse, young or otherwise, that I have not gained emotional control over from the ground. Period. If you do not have that control from the ground, keep working on it before you ever climb on her back.

Mental Aspect

How is your horse progressing mentally? Is she paying attention to you? Have you firmly established yourself as her leader? Is she able to stay focused for longer training sessions and build well on exercises, turning simple requests into more complex responses? Does she have a good work ethic, meaning she seems to enjoy being out with you and really listens? Is she a good student?

Again, if you do not have her mental aspect captured, it's probably too soon to ride. And some horses take longer than others to mature mentally as well as physically. You may have been doing a good job with the training, but your horse just needs more time for her mind to mature, even if her body is strong.

Physical Aspect

How is your horse progressing physically? This is without a doubt the area that draws the most attention and controversy, though I would argue that all three aspects are equally important. Everyone worries (and in some cases rightly so) that the horse is too physically immature to be ridden. They want to know when it's safe so that long-term soundness will not become an issue. But there really is no hard and fast rule. For starters, there are huge differences in how various breeds mature. A Quarter horse or a Paint horse will tend to mature faster than a Draft horse, for example. But even within the same breed you can have big individual differences.

The most obvious physical sign people look at is if the horse's knees are "closed," which is evaluated via X-ray. When a young horse has "open" knees, this means the growth plate above the knee is made of cartilage and the long bones are still growing. A mature horse has closed knees, which means this protective cartilage has all turned to bone. But remember, the entire skeletal structure is still growing, so the bones, joint, and cartilage can all have problems if the horse is not ready. An example of this is my little Paint cross named Foxy. As a 2-year-old, she had plenty of training and was emotionally and mentally ready to be ridden, but she was a smaller horse with very refined bone structure. I decided to give her another full year to grow before any one started riding her. Now at 3½, she is going wonderfully under saddle at all gaits and is very healthy.

So other than the knees being closed, what are some of the more obvious physical signs to look for? How long has it been since the horse has had a growth spurt? It's a very good idea to monitor the horse's height and weight, and any other key measurements so you will have a good idea when growth seems to have stabilized.

Another critical consideration is with the rider and the intended usage. Depending on the physical conformation of the horse, the size and skill of the rider can make a huge difference to the physical impact of actually riding the horse. Obviously, size translates to the amount of weight the horse will be carrying, but really the rider's skill—their natural seat—also makes a tremendous difference to how the horse experiences the weight. It can actually be less stressful for a horse to have a heavier rider with a very good seat than the opposite. A rider's ability to move with the horse, to synch their physical energy together, greatly eases the physical strain on the horse.

The amount and the type of riding you do obviously is tremendously important as well. Will you be doing mainly walk and then walk-trot work? How often do you plan to ride? What will the footing be like where you will be riding? And, yes, footing really does matter! The more and “harder” you intend to ride, the longer you might consider waiting before you start riding.

Many people these days seem to be starting to ride horses as 2-year-olds, getting them going nicely under saddle, and then giving them a year off, letting them grow up more, in a pasture or wherever. Others are waiting and starting horses as 4- and 5-year-olds. This is a more common practice (especially in Europe).

For the reasons I've already stated, I'm not going to say whether any of these are wrong or right; it depends on too many individual factors. I can only strongly emphasize that this is your young horse and you need to get the education and information to know when it's right for you to be riding your horse. So the answer to when any of us should start riding our own young horse is, as always, “It depends!”



Actual X-ray view of Jaz's knee.

When in doubt, call a vet. I did, since I knew I would be questioned because of Jaz's age. She is 14.1 hands now and will not mature above 14.3, with a very solid little Quarter horse body and strong legs. My vet gave me the go-ahead, and if she had not, I would not be riding her now. I have also heard from some vets that it is not important for the knees to be closed, so there are two schools of thought on that issue. So again, if there is any question in your mind, call your vet.

Assessing Jaz's Readiness for Riding

Let me tell you briefly how I determined the emotional, mental, and physical aspects of Jaz in particular, to assess her readiness for riding. First off, she is over 2 years old now, so that is still young. Emotionally, she has always been fairly complacent, but the amount of work I have done with her has helped me to firmly establish emotional control even when a situation arises where she does get fearful. So emotionally, she's in very good shape.

Mentally we have made excellent progress as well. She very much looks to me for leadership and guidance, and during all of the schooling lessons she is consistently an eager pupil, very focused and always wanting to please. I am confident that she was mentally ready to be ridden.

Physically, she is strong; her knees have closed, her growth has stabilized, and she has a nice strong back and good overall bone mass on her legs. Yes, her growth is continuing, but very gradually. From my perspective the signs were all good that she could be ridden. Now, I do have a good, light seat and am not a heavy rider. Plus my intention is to continue the schedule of light work even after she is being ridden regularly, where she is worked three days a week, with lots of continuing groundwork and some saddle time; lots of walking and giving to the bit for starters; working more on guiding hips and basic cues. Then we would progress slowly into walk-trot work. Cantering would be a long way off. When I do ride her, it will be in twenty-minute sessions after the groundwork. I will build slowly increasing the amount of time in the saddle by just minutes each time. I am not interested in riding a horse into the ground. Progress needs to be slow just like when starting the groundwork.

So was Jaz ready? I believed so, and I started riding her. I will be very carefully watching her, emotionally, mentally, and physically, looking for any signs that it may have been too soon. As I have said before, I intend to keep this terrific horse, so I am very interested in her long-term wellness. But whereas there are plenty of horses I would not ride until they were older, she does seem to be ready.

No one really does any damage riding a horse a few times when they are not ready. It's only when you don't pay attention and recognize the signs that the horse is not ready, but you keep riding anyway, that the harm is done. I always have an open mind and monitor progress carefully, so I am very comfortable with my decision to start riding her.

FIRST RIDES

Okay, so you've assessed your horse's readiness to be ridden and you think now is the time to mount up. However, don't just jump in the saddle because you're so excited about getting on! Before you take that first ride, buy the safety equipment I recommend in the following section and read through the next sections so that you can plan where and when to do these rides and prepare for what you will be doing. Above all, take it slow and easy.

Step 1: Buy Safety Equipment for Those First Rides

Everyone who will ride a young horse for the first few times should purchase and wear a helmet and a protective vest. We do this here at the ranch, and even I do this the first few times I get on a horse. I have only been bucked off seven times over the last twelve years, but at my age I can't afford to get hurt. At the ranch I recommend you always wear a helmet every time you ride, since horses are unpredictable animals. Make sure you get an approved helmet that fits well and is not too loose. Also, when you wear the helmet, make sure you actually fasten it.

Step 2: Don't Be in a Hurry to Get On

A popular event at horse expos is a colt-starting competition. During this competition, several clinicians are assigned untrained horses and then must get these same horses started under saddle in a period of hours. I did this with Jaz at a horse expo in Paso Robles, California, and they certainly can be a lot of fun and very educational. The problem is that people are watching highly trained professionals go through these exercises; professionals with deep experience and intuition, and with the superb timing and feel to get the job done so we can be riding the horse more quickly. Amateurs, though, should follow a step-by-step program like I have outlined in this book, which helps ensure that no training gaps are created. At the end of the day I am sure that any clinician would tell you, "Folks, don't try this at home!"

What we have been doing this last year is what I consider the ultimate way to start a young horse, especially for those of you who want to do it yourself. This methodical progression of exercises teaches our horse to look for us for leadership and direction, to give to pressure (and light pressure at that), and to obey our cues no matter what is happening externally. If we have done this job properly, whether in several weeks or several months (the time it takes is dictated by the individual physical, mental, and emotional aspects of each horse), the first rides are rarely a dramatic event. In fact, the way I usually do colt-starting, first rides are often pretty boring—and that’s a good thing!

Step 3: Start with Mounting Exercises

Any young horse, no matter how fantastic her temperament, has buttons that can be pushed. You have to be prepared for the unexpected because you just never know. You may have your horse completely sacked out in terms of being touched anywhere and by any object, but the horse may still react strongly to the experience of a rider on her back. We simply cannot sack out a horse to everything, and mounting may be one of those buttons that pushes her to react. Mounting feels different and it is hard to replicate the sensation without actually doing it yourself.

One thing you can do to help desensitize her to a rider is to create and use a “Mr. Jeans” riding dummy. This is simply a sturdy pair of jeans stuffed with sand so it has some real weight to it (see Month 9, “Jaz Goes Bridle-Less,” for a photo). We have one set up to tie onto the saddle, and we do round penning and line work with Mr. Jeans sitting on the horse. This adjusts the horse not only to weight on her back right where you will be but also to the feel of legs against her sides. If you see signs that the sensation makes her nervous, just keep working with Mr. Jeans until she has no reaction.

Before you get too excited about your first ride, let me tell you what I suggest you do, especially for those of you who are not professional trainers: Plan that the first day will be spent primarily on mounting exercises. Mount your horse, sit there for a minute, dismount, and then do it again. This gets the horse used to you stepping in and out of the saddle, and allows you to put weight in the stirrup for longer and longer times. Work on this from both sides and then begin staying in the saddle longer as well. Once this is going well, then you can think about asking for some first steps.

The act of mounting itself may become a longer exercise. Hopefully your horse has learned to stand well and to tie; you may have even taught her to ground-tie. But again, this will be something new for her, and she may try to escape the pressure by walking off. If your horse tries to move away at all while

you are attempting to mount, make her back up immediately, and not just a few steps either—make it real work for her! You are setting the expectation and standard for a lifetime of behavior for when you want to mount. I cannot stress enough how important it is to take the time now to make sure she understands that she needs to stand still until asked otherwise. After having her back, ask her to stand quietly for a moment and then go to mount. If she moves off at all while you are trying to mount, commence backing her from the ground again. Keep doing this until she stands still while you mount. There are a few things you can practice ahead of time to help be successful.

Do not use a mounting block for the first ten to fifteen rides. If the horse moves off or spooks, it presents more of a safety hazard for both of you. You *can* use a fence or a panel rail if you need the extra height. Prior to your first ride, you can have the horse practice standing next to the rail and you can also practice putting weight in the stirrup by pulling down on it, then letting it go to get the horse used to the sensation of when she will experience your foot and weight for the first time. Do this with your hands, literally pulling down on the stirrup. Finally, have a training buddy nearby. Please, do not try mounting your horse for the first time while you are alone. Your buddy may just be on standby, but it's better to have someone there in case something happens. They can also hold onto the lead rope (have a halter and a bridle on) while you are mounting—again, just in case.

If your horse has learned to stand during mounting, is accustomed to the stirrup being pulled down hard, and has experienced a decent amount of weight on her back, you will likely be able to quietly mount. So let's talk about how you may be feeling about your first ride on your horse. Many people will feel nervous; that's normal, of course, and shows you have a healthy regard for your well-being. But I want you to try to make yourself as *physically* relaxed as possible. Horses are very able to read body language from feeling body language, and you do not want your own nervousness to make them nervous. They cannot tell you are nervous from how you are feeling; they only read that your body is tense. So don't worry about how you are feeling internally; just concentrate on making yourself as physically relaxed as you can. That way you will not communicate your fear to the horse even if you are actually terrified. Just take nice, slow breaths, and smile, because it's harder to be physically tense when you smile. Then just mount up, make an effort to relax all your muscles, sit there for a moment, and then dismount.

If any of these activities seem to make your horse nervous, practice from the ground more before trying to mount again. What I mean by this is to give the horse a job. Keep her working and focused on you, bring her emotional level back down before trying to mount again. If the horse is moving around,

seems anxious, nervous, or just very energetic, it's probably not the right time for the first ride (or first sit). Go back to some basics and try again another day. If you have been able to mount and dismount without any fanfare, do it again a few more times and then pat yourself on the back, give your horse a rub on the neck, and call it a day. Good job!

Another good exercise I recommend before getting into the saddle gets the horse used to the feeling of shifting weight on her back. Sometimes when we mount, our weight repositions the saddle to the left, so when we are in the saddle, we have to keep shifting the saddle over to center it.

The next day, mount up again, dismount, and then mount up again. Focus on getting the horse used to the sensation of a rider getting on and off her back. Once the horse seems fairly complacent about the mount and dismount, try just sitting in the saddle for longer periods of time.

This exercise is done in the round pen and requires a lariat or a 30-foot line. Put a loop on the end of the lariat or the line and attach it to the saddle horn. In the round pen, as you ask the horse to trot off, pull on the rope to give the horse the same feeling as a rider shifting the saddle. Sometimes you will get a reaction out of it. I got a little reaction from Jaz when I first did this. Also make sure you do this at a canter and on both sides of your horse.

Step 4: Get Movement from the Saddle

Once the horse is relaxed with you sitting in the saddle, you can do basic go-forward work under saddle. If you have been doing consistent verbal pre-cues for your groundwork, a cluck or a kiss should get the horse to take a step or two at least. If not, use some leg while you do your verbal cue. If you feel comfortable, and your horse is not responding to your leg, give a tap with a dressage stick.

If you can't get your horse to move forward and she's not listening to your leg or dressage stick, which happened to me on my first ride, do what I did: Ask the hips to move to the right and then release. This is the same exercise we did earlier from the ground. To start, for example, if you want to move the hips over on your horse's left side, pick up on the left rein and put your left leg on the horse behind the cinch. Maintain the contact until the horse takes even a step in swinging her hips over. Release for the reward, and then pick up and do it again. Keep at it until she swings her hip all the way over when you pick up one rein. Then ask the hips to move to the left and then release. Keep doing this until you get one step or two forward and then release and reward her to let her know you are looking for forward movement. Keep repeating this until your horse finally connects the dots. Since Jaz and I did this a lot from the ground, when I went to pick up on one rein and held it, Jaz swung her hips right over.

At the same time you are trying to get forward movement, you are teaching the horse a one-rein emergency stop. This is the most important technique you can use to stop a horse. In other words, if she gets out of control—spooks or bolts—you can move the hindquarters over. This could save your life some day! Picking up on two reins to stop an out-of-control horse will not stop the horse. This only traps the horse's energy and fuels her desire to escape. By picking up on one rein and moving the hips over, you actually reduce the energy and give it someplace to go. So to do a one-rein emergency stop, maintain contact until the horse's energy is diminished and the horse stands quietly. This is a good exercise for both you and your horse to practice a lot in the beginning.

Remember not to ask for much—this is only your second or third time on the horse. You want her to get used to how you feel on her back and how it changes her balance as well. Keep your body language and cues low-key at first; you can always add more pressure later.

In general for almost all of your riding exercises, think back to how we started training this horse from the ground, because that is the same thing we are going to do under saddle:

1. Teach the horse to go forward, and to go forward consistently when asked.
2. Teach her to go and then stop when asked.
3. Do some directional work and backing, though really, I am never too concerned about directional control for the first rides.

With the previous groundwork training, we did much of this work at the trot or the canter. But I want you just to spend time at the walk for your horse's first rides. In most cases, you will have 70 to 80 percent of carryover of your cues from the groundwork into the saddle, but the remaining 20 to 30 percent is a lot when you are on top of an unbroken horse. So take the time to reestablish all the cues from the saddle at the walk.

For now, just work on cuing your horse to walk and stop when you ask, and do some basic work moving the hips over. In the event your horse bolts or bucks, the best method to stop the behavior is to do a one-rein stop immediately (see Month 9). Otherwise, please follow these suggestions to ensure you set up yourself and your horse to be safe and successful for the first month of riding:

- Always do first rides in small, confined areas that the horse is familiar with, such as a round pen or a paddock or other small arena.
- Try to have someone with you when you do these first rides.

- Try to choose a time for your rides where there will be minimal external activity (like other horses riding around, loud noises, and so on).
- Always do comprehensive groundwork with your horse before you ever climb into the saddle. This is your chance to see where she is physically, mentally, and emotionally before you ride. Never skip this step, especially with an unbroken horse.
- Take your time and go slowly the first few dozen rides. As with groundwork, make sure the exercises are broken into very simple, incremental steps so your horse understands what you want.
- Safety first! Never put yourself or your horse at risk.

FIRST RIDES ON JAZ

Now that I have told you how you *should* do first rides (which is how I nearly always do first rides myself), let me share with you what Jaz's actual first two rides were, and let me add for myself as well: "Don't try this at home!"

As you know, I am not only a trainer but a clinician as well. This means that throughout the year I appear at horse expos and other equestrian events and am asked to conduct a variety of demonstrations. For the Equine Experience at Paso Robles, I was asked to do something that was "educational, entertaining, exciting, and different" and had only about five minutes of time allotted. And this was to be done in front of a very large crowd of 2,500 or so.

I decided that I would showcase the terrific combination of Jaz's training and natural temperament by having her very first ride be during this event. I wanted to really set the stage where externally there would be a ton of stimuli to make a horse very emotional. I would demonstrate that even under those conditions, with the right training and terrific breeding, I could still do a first ride safely. Was this taking a chance? Maybe a small one, but not as much as you might think. As I say, I would never, ever recommend that anyone other than a seasoned professional who knows their horse extremely well try anything like this. Yes, Jaz is a young horse, and something could push one of her buttons. But I knew from working with her so much, and having confidence in my own skills as well, that even if she did explode, it would be a situation I could manage; that even under pressure she would respond to my cues.

Two other factors made this event more challenging. This was only her second trailer trip ever (and was about five hours each way). I also had never done any formal trailer-loading exercises with her. But every time I asked her to walk

into a trailer, she followed me in. This was because of all the groundwork we had done earlier. I had never taught her a formal cue to go into the trailer, which is necessary so that the horse will always load even when emotional.

The second factor was that this was the first time she had been off my ranch since I got her, so the opportunity provided lots of great schooling experience for her. When we arrived at the Mid-State Fairgrounds on Thursday, she walked out of the trailer calmly, but she was curious. She wasn't bolting or startled but was concerned about the new environment, which is normal. There was no turnout area so I did line work with her. She wasn't as responsive as she is usually, but this was normal because her attention was on the new environment. She had only been to three locations in her life: the 300-acre ranch, my place, and now here. After a while she started lightening up and paying attention to me.

After I finished the line work, I got her bedded down in a stall with 12 inches of bedding from my sponsor and then left to set up our booth. That evening I came back to check on her to make sure she had water and grain. Because of all the preparation going on that evening for the event, I decided to take her for a walk. It was a great opportunity for a de-spooking exercise. I walked her in the vendor's building where people were busily setting up booths, and we wove around all the traffic and boxes that were scattered all over. She was watching all the activity but wasn't trying to jump into my lap. She was pretty darn quiet, and I was impressed.

The next morning I got her out early and did more line work with her. I had Chelsea Schneider, the teenage daughter of my friend Lee, take Jaz around the midway again, exposing her to all the hustle and bustle.

When evening arrived, Jaz and I had to wait about an hour and half before our performance in the warm-up area. There was a lot of activity and commotion going on back there; riders were practicing their slide stops, cows were mooing and jostling around in their pens next to us, big bright lights shone down spotlighting all the activity, music was blaring over the loud speakers. Jaz's emotional level was not out of control, but she was definitely concerned. So I just kept asking her to do different things and to give her opportunities to pause and relax. Any time she got concerned or excited, I did some change of directions, and for the most part she did very well, even though I expected her to do better.

When the time finally came for our performance in the arena, we entered that arena dramatically. I was in the passenger seat of a diesel-powered golf cart leading Jaz while a friend drove us into the arena. We circled the arena with Jaz dragging ropes behind her and a tarp on top of her saddle. I got out of the cart and did line work with her to get her mind on me. To show the audience how well mannered she is even with a lot of distractions, I draped a tarp over



In front of the crowd with the leaf blower and the tarp.

the line and then over her and she did great with both. I even fired up a leaf blower right next to her and brought it close, blowing her mane around like I was drying her hair with a giant hair dryer. After all of this I was ready to get on. Here's the sequence of what I did:

1. I put my foot in the stirrup, put a little weight into it, and took it out.
2. I put my foot in the stirrup again and added more weight into it and took it out.
3. I put my foot in the stirrup, stood up, leaned over her, and patted her on the right side, then threw my leg over and got off on the other side.
4. I got up and down on the right side of her.
5. And finally, I got on.

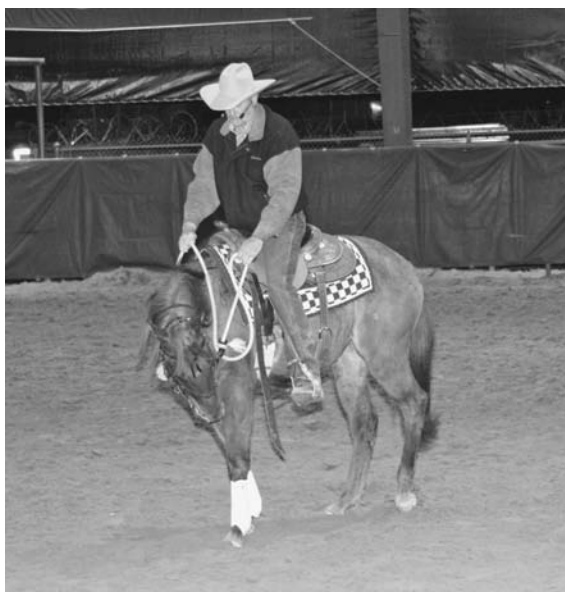
She was doing very well, but I think she was confused more than anything else at this point. Besides me being on her for the first time, there were bright lights shining down and the sound of a huge audience reacting loudly to our performance as they sat in the stands that surrounded us.

I got her to move her hips over, but when I tried to get forward movement she started backing up in confusion. She didn't know what going forward was



Mounting and dismounting.

because I never had been on her back before! So I did what I normally do: I moved her hips over one way and then the other to get movement in the feet. I did this over and over again and finally maneuvered her so that she was facing the gate. When this happened, I got a little bit of forward movement because the gate is a natural draw, a magnet, for most horses. When I got closer to the gate, I moved her hips over again to go forward toward the middle of the



First time on!

arena. I then used a dressage stick, which is what I normally do, tapped her, got her forward, and then got off because I only had five minutes to do all of this. If I had had another five minutes I probably could have got her to trot around the arena. It was just that she was not sure of what direction to go in. (Remember, a horse can go in six different directions: left, right, forward, back, up, and down.) She never tried down or up; she either backed up or went right or left. If I had more time, I could have closed those doors, and she would have figured out what I wanted.

The next morning, I led her inside the vendor's building to our booth and then to a sponsor's booth to take pictures. She was just as calm here as at home. I then took her down the midway area where the trailer vendors are and got on her and she didn't have any problem going forward. We walked back to the barn and met up with Chelsea. She and I took Jaz over to a grassy area, and she got on Jaz bareback. Jaz was doing so great being very light to the halter that Chelsea rode her around with just the halter on.

When the event was over and we returned to the ranch, I did go back to square one and commence with her riding training just as I outlined above that you should do. I am very glad I took the opportunity to try this with her. I am a clinician, and my intention is that Jaz will be used in a lot of my demonstrations and events, so it was great to confirm my belief that she has the mind to excel in those environments.



Second ride in Paso Robles down the midway.



Third ride with 13-year-old Chelsea Schneider riding.



Jaz in our booth at Equine Experience.

Training Month 8

Jaz Learns to Trailer Load

Because I have established a leadership role with Jaz, she willingly goes wherever I ask her to. For example, at the ranch I can lead her into the office, the hay barn, the tack room, or the tack shop; she usually just stands there looking like she could care less about her surroundings. That's how I got her to load into the trailer when I took her to the horse expo in Paso Robles in April. But this May, it is time to do formal trailer-loading exercises with Jaz. During these exercises, I will teach Jaz to calmly load when I give the go-forward cue, and then to unload when I direct her to back out. I will also teach her that the trailer is a place to relax and rest.

It's good to teach a horse to load with a cue because you never know when your horse may have an opinion about loading into a trailer and decide she doesn't want to go in. In fact, let me share a story with you about how this happened with my horse Tennison nine years ago. I used Tennison for many years to do trailer-loading demos at horse expos because he did it so well. In fact, you can see him on a few of my trailer-loading tapes. I use him as an example of what your horse *should* look like when loading and unloading. Well, one morning at four o'clock I was trying to load him in the trailer when he decided he simply did not want to go in. He was locking up his legs, saying, "Naa-ahh, I am *not* going in." I don't know if it was because he was having a bad hair day or he didn't have his coffee or he woke up grumpy. I have to admit that my reaction was like any one else's—I got upset. I was on a time schedule, and Tennison was not cooperating. I was thinking, "Come on! I've got to go. Come on, let's go, Tennison, I'm going to be late!" So I had to stop and consider what I tell everyone else to do in this situation—don't get upset; this is actually a training opportunity for you to reinforce the go-forward cue.

I worked with Tennison until he had a stronger conditioned response to the go-forward cue when directed to get into the trailer. All together it took me about two minutes to get him in. But this story is a good example of why it is important to establish a strong cue before you load a horse into the trailer.

I have witnessed a lot of ugly trailer-loading scenes: people sedating horses to get them in, others pulling them in with a butt rope behind them, and a couple of guys on each side pushing. I have actually seen one person going in the trailer and trying to pull the horse in, and another person standing behind the horse, trying to drive her in with a pitchfork or a broom. I have seen another whipping at a horse's legs, causing the horse to rear up and bump his head. Some people resort to stud or lip chains. Others try to lure the horse into the trailer with a feed bucket. These methods may work temporarily, but one day they will not. And that's why the trailer-loading lesson is important because without establishing a strong cue, one day your horse may decide not to load.

At expos or clinics you may see horse trainers with solid skills who can load pretty much any problem horse in under ten to fifteen minutes. The few of us who specialize in working with problem horses can usually do it in less than five minutes. However, at the ranch it normally takes me two to three hours to retrain a horse with trailer-loading problems. Training your young horse should only take one hour or less because the horse has not developed any negative feelings about the trailer.

But trailer loading is not a timed event. It's not won by how fast any of us can load a horse; it should instead be about training a horse to be comfortable with all four components of trailering: loading, standing, riding in the trailer, and unloading. And that takes preparation and schooling.

WHY A TRAILER SEEMS SCARY TO A HORSE

Several aspects of trailering tend to make most horses nervous. First, we are asking them to go into a small, confined area that is cavelike. This is counter-intuitive to their natural flight instinct because they cannot escape easily. Second, we are asking them to cross an object, either stepping up into a trailer or walking up a ramp. Again the footing issue in both of these makes most horses naturally nervous. Third, we are asking them to stand and ride in small, enclosed, often loud area while they are being moved somewhere over which they have no control. Finally, after they have been asked to remain upright and steady in a moving container, we then ask them to back out into the unknown.

Trailering really does call for a horse to go against her natural grain in a lot of ways. Do some horses seem to take to it very easily? Sure. Some horses are naturally compliant, with very low fear levels, like Jaz. If you have one of those, chances are that teaching them to trailer was not a hardship. But even with one of those horses, it does not hurt to school a horse to be comfortable with trailering, whether they are fearful or accepting. The more confident and comfortable

your horse is in trailering, the freer you will be to trail ride, show, and get your horse to the vet for an emergency. Having a horse who reliably loads under any condition is one of the best investments in training time you can make.

THE FOUR PARTS OF TRAILER LOADING

I work on four parts of trailer loading with a horse. The first is that the horse goes in comfortably and knows what to do and she takes her time doing it. This means the horse walks into the trailer (does not rush in) and knows where to stand in the trailer. The second is that she stands in the trailer quietly. I see a lot of horses who go in, but, boy, you have to move quickly to tie them in, get the butt chain around them, and close the door, because they are not comfortable in the trailer. The third is that we want the horse to unload quietly. A lot of times they will go in, but the moment you untie them when you get to the destination, they come flying out! I get a lot of e-mails asking, "This is quite dangerous, so how do I fix it?"

We don't have much control over the fourth area, which is how comfortable the horse is in the trailer when we are driving her somewhere. What we *can* control, though, is being a good driver: not going too fast around turns, not braking at the last minute at stop signs and lights and causing the horse to be thrown forward, and not accelerating too quickly and throwing the horse toward the back of the trailer. The only way your horse will become more comfortable in the trailer is putting on miles. Start with quiet, short trips, and whenever possible, on road conditions that are favorable to the horse: not a lot of steep hills, curves, or stopping and going. I tell clients that if it is not too hot outside, they should load their horse up and go grocery shopping or run errands. Just like teaching horses to load, ideally you take the time and incrementally allow them to build their comfort zone when being moved around. And, of course, the type of trailer can greatly increase or lessen their anxiety.

No matter what type of trailer you have, make sure it looks as open and inviting as possible. Ensure any dividers are out of the way and windows are open—anything to make it appear less confined.

Also, it doesn't matter whether your trailer has a ramp or is a step-up type. I get calls from people saying their horse won't load into a step-up trailer so they had to go out and buy the kind with a ramp. It also doesn't matter if you have a slant-load (a trailer configuration where the horse loads and rides at an angle) or a straight-load (a configuration where the horse loads and rides facing forward). Loading into a trailer is no different than crossing an object. If your horse won't load into a particular kind of trailer, it's because of a training issue.

It actually took about 5,000 miles of hauling Tennison to different locations before he became quiet and relaxed during trailering trips. He walked in fine, stood fine, and walked out fine, but he was not comfortable moving on the road in the trailer, and I could not do anything about that. Time spent on the road in the trailer solved this issue.

Now unlike Tennison, when Jaz came out of the trailer on her first ride to the central coast expo, she turned around and gazed around casually. She looked like she had been trailering for years. But, of course, some horses are not as easy to trailer as Jaz, and it just takes longer.

TRAILER-LOADING EXERCISES

All the groundwork you did earlier lays the foundation for the trailer-loading exercise. If you have done a good job teaching ground manners, the go-forward cue, change of directions, backing up, and going over objects such as tarps, trailer loading will not be a big deal.

Think of trailer loading as a de-spooking exercise like crossing the tarp. Like the tarp exercise, your horse has to have solid ground manners prior to attempting the exercise. Also, your horse needs to respond well when asked to move her shoulders and hips over, and must have a very healthy respect for space and not crowd you at all. This is important prior to asking them to load because horses understand respect and leadership through controlling space and direction. If they look to us for that direction, they naturally become more willing.

Your horse must be schooled in:

- Change-of-direction exercises: You use this to get the horse to face the opening of the trailer.
- Go-forward cue: With your left arm, direct the horse as you did for change-of-direction exercises into the back of the trailer and with the other tap with a dressage stick at the hip to get forward movement.
- Backup cue: You teach the horse to unload from the trailer slowly with this cue.
- Shoulder control: You use this to teach your horse to move away from you.

You must firmly establish all these cues before you attempt to do this exercise.

If a horse has a trailer-loading problem (I mean she won't get any closer than 30 feet to a trailer) I will spend about ten to twenty minutes away from the trailer teaching her basic exercises like those I explained in earlier chapters. I teach her respect by controlling her feet, to pay attention to me, and to get her emotional level down. The same horse whom the clients couldn't get any closer to the trailer than 30 feet, I can get to load in four minutes. Because I established the go-forward cue, I established leadership and trust with the horse.

The go-forward cue is the critical foundation stone for so many different exercises; this is especially true for trailer loading. Please do not ask your horse to load until you have developed a rock-solid go-forward cue at the hips using the same spot every time (see Month 3, "Preparing Jaz for Saddle Work and the Vet"). Depending on how trained your horse is, this can mean going back to line work. Change-of-direction exercises are a great place to start. And by the way, do not do these near the trailer to begin with. Do not even think of adding the trailer into the training program until that go-forward cue is 100 percent successful.

For this exercise, you need a 12- to 14-foot line. You should put boots either on all four legs or at least on the front legs. I recommend that when you trailer your horse, always put boots on to protect her legs.

Step 1: Do Change-of-Direction Exercises

Even if the horse is nice and quiet like Jaz, I like to start doing change-of-direction exercises about 20 feet from the trailer or where your horse is comfortable. So if she's comfortable at 100 feet, so be it. If the comfort zone is right next to the trailer, that's fine. Take the time to watch your horse's body language and let her tell you where she is truly relaxed and confident. Again, this is not a timed event. Your goal is to school your horse for a lifetime of happy trailering. Take it slow and do it right. So if your horse is a 100-footer, that's fine! And if you are not sure, then err on the side of caution and put more space between you and the trailer.

I follow the same incremental process to teach a horse to load into a trailer as I do for a horse to stand on a tarp. In the tarp exercise, our goal is for the horse not only to go over the tarp but to stand on it. In this trailer-loading exercise, our goal is to have the horse to go into the trailer and stand quietly. Remember, when we first started the tarp exercise, we told the horse to stop the feet at the farthest point away from the tarp so that she could see the tarp. This is the same strategy I use for trailer loading.

Start doing change-of-direction exercises with the trailer in sight, at the point where your horse is comfortable. As you continue the exercises and your

horse relaxes, ask her to stop and stand closer and closer to the trailer. When she is solid at 100 feet, then you can move to 90 feet, or 80 feet. Again, let your horse tell you where is comfortable! Some people may stop for the day at 20 feet if the horse has made significant progress, and move closer the next day. You should only stop when you have seen your horse has made significant improvement, but depending on how fearful of the trailer your horse is, that will vary. The goal is to do the change-of-direction line work until you are about 2 to 5 feet from the back of the open trailer.



Start away from the trailer.



Work closer doing change-of-direction work.



Approach the trailer.



Getting closer.



Ask the horse to go forward.



Let the horse sniff the trailer.



Ask to go forward.



Keep asking for the go-forward.



If you get resistance, block sideways movement and allow only forward movement.



Let her rest when she gets close enough to sniff the trailer again.

Step 2: Use the Go-Forward Cue to Load the Horse

When I get the horse to stop in front of the trailer opening, I stand with my left shoulder to the left side of the trailer, so I am blocking the horse if she tries to go past the trailer instead of into it. Because I have taught the horse the go-forward cue for concentrated circles I direct with my left hand and ask the horse to go into the trailer. Most of the time, the horse will sniff the trailer, take one step in, and then back out or turn around. That's fine; I let

her come out. Then I stop the feet as in the change-of-direction exercise and I direct and send her in again. The horse will go in one step or two, then want to come out again, which I let her do, then I send her right back in again.

I just keep asking the horse to go forward a little more incrementally, and let her know that she is doing well by releasing as soon as she gives me a little more try. If her forward cue has been established, and you have been releasing the pressure at the right time to reward her, you should see her progress to both feet in, and then four feet in. Once your horse is solid with that, you can start to ask her to stand for longer periods of time in the corner of the trailer.

Now, the key here is never to let the horse rest outside of the trailer. The horse can rest for a moment by looking in but never any significant down time like five minutes. Once the horse looks in, you can say "good for you" and send her right in. The only time the horse is allowed to rest is when she is actually *in* the trailer. Ask the horse to work outside the trailer, and then once she is in, let her just hang out (once she is okay standing there). Not asking her to move is a reward in itself for the horse. She will come to know that the trailer means she gets to rest.

Once the horse is in the trailer, if it is a slant-load type, some people let the horse turn around and look out. Don't let your horse do this. Instead, drive the horse out and load her in again. There is a fallacy that a horse is more comfortable riding backward in a trailer. I don't know any horse who doesn't know where an escape route is to go home. How many horses do we know who always know where the arena gate is? So this is the reason the horse wants to turn around; she wants to face the trailer exit, which increases her emotional level. It is better to teach the horse that she is more comfortable if she faces forward. So, you are going to keep sending your horse in enough times that soon she is thinking that she is a lot more comfortable looking in than she is turning around and going out.

In the beginning your horse may get excited, jumping into the trailer and then rushing back out. Don't worry about it. If you keep sending her in and out enough times, she will slow down about going in and slow down about coming out and soon will end up wanting just to stand in the corner. You want your horse to love that far corner. The same principle applies with a straight-load trailer. The horse just can't turn around. But she will try to back out quickly, so you must send her back in.



This time the go-forward cue gets a foot in . . .



. . . Then two feet.



Jaz backing out on her own . . .



. . . Then ask to go back in again.



The step up.



She's in and gets to rest.



If she turns and rushes out . . .



. . . Send her back in immediately.



This time she stays and gets a good rest.

Step 3: Use the Back-Up Cue to Unload the Horse

Once your horse is comfortable being in the trailer, you can teach her how to back out of the trailer. When you ask a horse to back out of a trailer—and yes, you should teach a horse to back out of a slant-load—the horse will want to escape the trailer. When she does back up, she may want to run you over (come in your direction), bolt away from you, rear, bite, or kick at you. If you have done a good job of groundwork, most of these things won't happen.

However, if they do happen, correct the behavior within two seconds of its occurrence. If you miss that window, don't bother, but if the behavior is likely, have your dressage stick ready and correct by a single quick strike as follows: If your horse rears, strike her below the front knee while the leg is still in the air. For a cow kick—a kick to the side made with the hind leg—strike below the hock. If your horse bolts, stop her feet and bring her back around with quick, decisive action. If the horse strikes at you or bites, also strike her once below the knee. Please note these are corrections, not punishments! They should never be done in anger, and they must be done right away if the horse is to understand cause and effect. Continue with the correction for each behavior until the horse desists. Continue also to do change-of-direction line work as needed to allow the horse to be using her energy productively and to stay focused.

Once the horse is comfortable going in and out of a slant-load, I can step into the trailer. Until then there is no way I will step into the trailer, because the horse may want to turn around with me trapped on the left side and try to run me over. Once I am in the trailer, I can start to ask the horse to back out nice and quiet.



Ask her to go in with you, only when it is safe to go in.



Going in.



Once in, ask her to back up.



Asking to back out.



Let her rest when she's out.



Then back in and repeat.

Training Month 9

Jaz Goes Bridle-Less

Between our ride at the Equine Experience in the latter part of April and now, I have not ridden Jaz much. But when I did ride her, it was very exciting! For my seventh ride, I used her for my “De-spooking/Crossing Obstacles on Ground/Mounted” demonstration at the Western States Horse Expo held in Sacramento, California. Throughout the nation, exhibitors and horsemen alike know the Western States Horse Expo as the gold standard of equine expositions.

As if this wasn't enough, I rode her bridle-less in the round pen and then around the ranch at home. Jaz did well with this. All in all, June has been a really exciting month. All the things we did earlier from the ground paid off this month when I got in the saddle; we were able to do a lot of fun things. I have to say Jaz is really great to work with and is one of my favorite horses to get out and play with.

JAZ IN SACRAMENTO

In Sacramento, Jaz did exceptionally well. The expo was held over three days (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday), and I was scheduled to perform my demonstration on Saturday. So to get Jaz acclimated, we arrived at the Cal Expo fairgrounds on Thursday. When I backed her out of the trailer, she just gazed around casually. I had brought two other horses from the ranch, and they too appeared unfazed about the new environment. Melinda and Drexel Gaw, friends who came with me to help, each led a horse and I led Jaz through a glass door into a large building with a concrete floor where they would stay. Calmly passing through the door and then walking along on the concrete floor with no concern, we headed to a row of stalls where they would be housed. We dropped them off at their temporary stalls, gave them some hay, and watched as the horses all dropped their heads and munched contentedly.

Later, I took a break from setting up our booth and led Jaz through the vendor building where boxes were stacked haphazardly all over. With barely enough room for a human to fit through this obstacle course, let alone a horse, Jaz and I negotiated a path through. In some cases, her sides brushed the boxes, but she continued on unfazed. All that de-spooking with ropes and plastic sure paid off! As I passed by a young lady, I heard her comment, "Oh, look at Jaz, she is doing really well!" The trainer with her said, "Well, that is because Charles has trained this horse from the beginning." That's true, and I'd like to take credit for that, but I also reminded the young lady that you first have to start out with a good-minded horse, like Jaz, to have this kind of end result. When you combine good breeding with this type of training, the horse is more willing and compliant in new situations and doesn't get overly excited.

Later that afternoon, I did line work with Jaz to exercise her. Her line work was not as good as usual because she was distracted, not like a wild thing running around, but she wasn't as light. In my book *Building Your Dream Horse*, I talk about how if your horse is light and responsive at home, it will not be quite as light in a new environment. Therefore, it's our job to do our training at home and to also expose them to different environments so that when we do go to a place as crowded and bustling as this expo, they are not as nervous and heavy. By the end of the lesson, she acted like she was at home.

Walking down to the other end of the grounds, we headed to where the cows were housed in their pens. When Jaz saw them, she could have cared less. After that I put her away for the night.

The next morning Drexel lead Jaz wearing a web halter around the midway part of the expo grounds, and again she behaved well, no bolting or spooking. When I trailer a horse or just lead her around, I put a web halter on her. However, when I am doing line work with a horse, I put a rope halter on her because that is a training tool. My goal is to perform the same exercises—line work and concentrated circles—with a web halter. If you can do these with a web halter, then you have a light and responsive horse.

Drexel wandered by the vendor's building to visit with me. Because Jaz was so composed, I made a quick decision—I led her over to a park bench and mounted on her bareback! For her sixth ride, I rode her bareback with a halter on around the midway. We did this for five minutes; I wanted to keep it low key and not make it a big deal.

In a stall next to the arena I saw some alpacas. I took Jaz over to see them, and I think the alpacas were more concerned about her than she was about them. She just went right over and sniffed them without any hesitation. I have to say all of this was really fun! Now, this is not the usual response you see when a horse is faced with something so foreign. Usually once a horse catches a whiff of the alpaca scent she stiffens up, snorts, and tries to bolt away.



Jaz in the vendor booth.

CROSSING OBJECTS DEMONSTRATION

On Saturday afternoon around three o'clock, Jaz and I did our demonstration in the Dodge Trucks Arena. Beforehand, I had saddled and bridled Jaz and put a halter on under that so I could switch between groundwork and in-the-saddle work. I also set up a minicourse with tarps, poles, and a giant multicolored vinyl soccer ball.

During line work on the ground, she went over everything calmly. Then I got on her and showed the crowd how to guide her left or right. I demonstrated how I worked through her little glitch of when I wanted to steer her left she started to turn right. I corrected this by making it uncomfortable for her to go right. I guided her to the right with the right rein and held the left rein straight back against her neck to block any movement to the left. I also applied my left leg (see the section "Gaining Shoulder Control," later in this chapter). Next, I walked her across the 20-by-40-foot plastic tarp and poles just fine. When she came to the huge soccer ball, I have to admit she was just a little bit concerned about it. Because she had learned directional control, I started out about 20 feet away from the ball and changed directions like I did with the tarp work: I walked her to the left and then to the right of it. I did this for about five minutes or less and soon we were pushing the ball around the arena. The next day, I saddled and bridled her again and walked over a bridge to a round pen. This was her eighth ride.



Jaz in front of a crowd at the Western States Horse Expo.

My entire experience with Jaz at the expo was pleasant and very enjoyable. It just goes to show that the combination of a great disposition and foundation training can result in a horse who even when exposed to new things can remain calm and well mannered.

WORKING AT HOME WITH JAZ

At home, I continued to refine the go-forward cue on Jaz. I used light leg pressure to move her forward, and if she was sluggish, I reinforced the cue by tapping on her hindquarters with a dressage stick. If I am consistent, she will soon be moving out with only the slightest pressure from my calves. The other things I worked on were shoulder control and stopping. I spent about twenty minutes two or three times per week working on these exercises. I also had my assistant trainer, Lisa, work on Jaz's canter because Jaz is still growing and Lisa weighs about 60 pounds less than I do. I also think it is a good idea to get your horse used to being handled by different riders.

This month I got six rides in the arena. She had a little bit of a problem when I picked up the left rein to guide her left; she thought I wanted her to go right. I didn't force it on the first couple of rides. But on the third ride, I took my left hand out and away, added my outside rein to stop forward movement, and bumped with my outside leg until she moved to the left and came off the rein. We worked on this for several minutes to get improvement and then again over the next few rides until I got her to move forward and follow her nose wherever I directed it.

After reading about Jaz, it may sound like she is perfect and never does anything wrong. Not true! She is a great-minded horse who I enjoy, but she does occasionally have a few problems. Around her seventeenth ride, she started lifting her head up and away from me when I tried to put the bit in her mouth when bridling her. This is normal since she is associating the bridle with "going to work." To correct this, I cupped my left hand like the letter V under her chin and when she would lift her head up and away from me to the right, I would push up with my hand and follow her so that she couldn't escape it. When she turned her head back in to me or dropped her head down, I released the pressure. In other words, I made it difficult for her to put her head anywhere that I didn't want it. I wanted it waist high where it is easy for me to bridle her.

The other problem I had with her around her thirtieth ride was that she became cinchy. Again this is normal—her saddle fits well, and I never cinch her up quickly and tightly right away. So I had to go back to the exercise using

the rope cinch we did in Month 6, Part 2, "Jaz Wears a Saddle and Bridle," to get her accustomed to the cinch again.

In addition to all this, Jaz has now entered puberty; in other words, she knows she is a mare, with mare hormones. She still is a good-minded horse, is easy to train, and has a nice disposition. But there are times when she is starting to act like a mare, pinning her ears and trying to kick at a horse when he passes her and acting a little sassier in general. Remember in Month 1, "Charles Meets Jaz," I talked about the trainability of mares? Hormones are a factor now, which means it will take me a little longer to work through some of these issues.

Jaz Learns Shoulder Control

Because Jaz had learned how to move her hips over, I have control over her back end. Now I need to teach her shoulder control so that I gain control over her front end.

About 4 feet from the rail, I picked up the rein and turned Jaz into the rail to follow her nose. I also bumped with my outside leg to move her shoulder over. When I did this, I used my body as well. I rotated my body and hips and looked in the direction I wanted her to go. Looking with your eyes, shoulders, and belly button even subtly in preparation for a turn becomes a pre-cue for your horse. Your horse will feel these shifts in your body position and respond to them.

For example, if I want to move the shoulder over to the left, I would pick up the left rein; turn my head, shoulders, and hips to the left to open up my left leg; and bump with my right leg if needed until I got some kind of reaction and she moved left. This series of aids opens up a door for Jaz to go left but blocks forward movement. Don't stop bumping your horse until you get a reaction and the shoulder moves over. If you stop, you will teach your horse to ignore your leg. In the beginning, the movement is not always pretty; staying consistent will make it become more fluid.

Throughout this exercise, ideally, you want to stay balanced in the saddle, not lean right or left. However, in the beginning you can shift your weight to your right seat bone to push your horse to move left. Exaggerating this cue helps push the horse in that direction.

Jaz and I continued doing this exercise, making a series of circles for about twenty minutes. Later in the month, I expanded on this exercise by turning farther away from the rail about 10 to 15 feet and making a series of figure eights.



Jaz and I enjoying a photo session.

Stopping with Pre-Cues

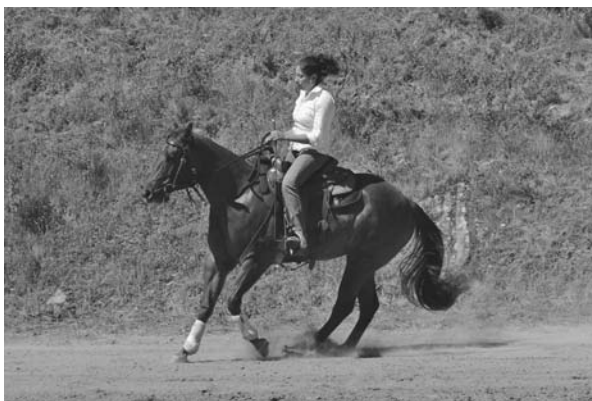
The other thing I worked on was her stops. The goal you want to accomplish is that your horse stops because of a series of pre-cues you taught her, not from pulling on the rein. If you teach your horse to stop this way, she will remain light.

So to teach Jaz to stop from pre-cues, I would allow my heel to drop down (but not brace in the stirrups) to allow my seat to become deeper or sit on my pockets and then say “whoa.” Because we had used the word “whoa” in her groundwork she knew what it meant. Of course, initially when I gave her these pre-cues, she did not respond. So I picked up on the reins and stopped her and then backed her up to reinforce them. This correction also helped her back-ups; they were great! If you run into problems getting your horse to back up, try this: Once the stop is completed, put your leg on the horse and as she takes a step forward, pick up the reins; when she takes a step back, immediately release the pressure (both rein and leg aid) to reward the behavior and let her know that is what you want.

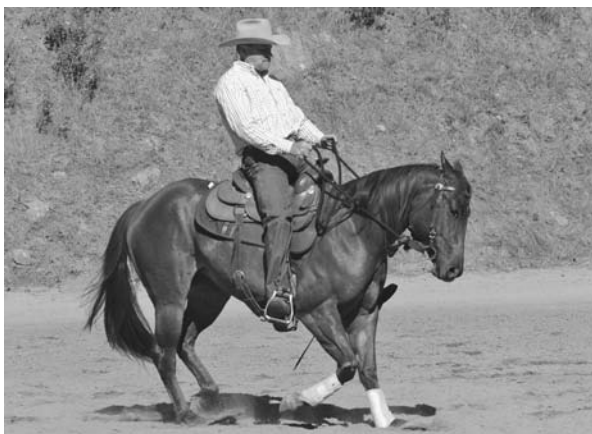
After a few rides, Jaz would stop when she felt me drop my seat. It is very important to use your pre-cues first and only after should you use the rein. Teaching her to stop was very easy because I was consistent with my cues and corrections. By using cues consistently, you teach your horse to learn to become lighter and lighter to avoid the correction.



First canter with Lisa, my assistant trainer.



Lisa getting a nice stop.



Working on the stop.

Going Bridle-Less

In between my training sessions I put a nylon halter on Jaz and looped the lead around to the other side of the halter to make reins. I rode her around the ranch this way. Even though I trained her with a rope halter, which I recommend because it has a lot clearer contact and displacement of pressure, I decided to use this halter. I did about two or three of these rides for a week.

On her seventeenth ride I rode her bridle-less in the round pen. Before I got on, I worked her in the round pen because she was feeling kind of fresh. After I got on Jaz, I took off her bridle and put the looped reins over her head and neck. I then used these to guide her.

To turn her left, for example, I would rotate my hips in the direction I wanted her to go in (left) and then lay the right rein of the rope up against her neck. Because I was guiding her this way she was learning to move off the combination of seat, legs, and rope. This was the beginning of learning to neck rein. She remembered this from the shoulder control work we did earlier. When I did the shoulder control work with her, I put the outside rein on her neck. At the time she didn't know what that meant, and I had to bump her over with the leg and restrict her forward movement and her ability to go right so her body had to go left.

All of these were pre-cues and from this you can teach the horse how to neck rein. Jaz was not as consistent or responsive to my leg as I would like but instead was responding to the rope on her neck. But that's fine. It still was fun and exciting because she was beginning to listen to my leg.



In the round pen.



Taking off the bridle.



Working on turns.



Standing relaxed after her first bridle-less ride.

Sometimes when she got to a point where she got confused, instead of arguing with her by using the outside rein and leg, I would pick up the inside rein and move the hip over and point her nose in the direction I wanted her to go. I don't mind a horse resisting, but when it is a no-win situation, where the horse is locking up and just laying on the rein and your hands, you need to change tactics. Jaz did this pretty well because I taught her this on the ground, when we did the concentrated circles.

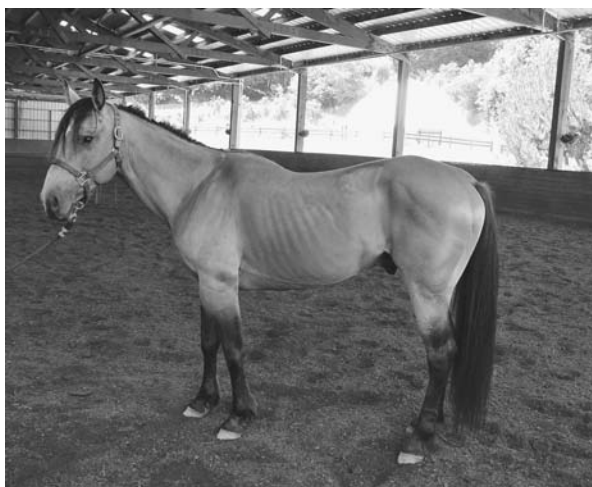
COLT STARTING AT THE RANCH

The way we start young horses at Charles Wilhelm Training is not usually done the way I did it in Paso Robles in a foreign environment in front of a large crowd (see Month 7, Part 2, "Successful First Rides with Jaz"). What I do on that first ride takes advantage of the fact that the horse looks to the handler (me) on the ground for direction. This is due to all the round pen, line, and tarp work we did earlier. If you look back, we taught our horse in the round pen to do inside turns and outside turns and to stop and turn and face us by using the verbal pre-cue "whoa." When we did the line work, such as change of direction, we used the same pre-cue to stop the feet. So by the time we get into the saddle, the horse knows what "whoa" means. She also knows the go-forward verbal cues we used in the round pen or for line work. For me, the long kiss means canter or a gait with energy; a double cluck is a trot, and one cluck means go-forward.

The handler on the ground is like a snubbing horse. A snubbing horse is usually a gelding who is very good-minded and quiet. Snubbing green colts to these experienced horses calmed the young horse so a handler could get in the saddle for a first ride. The other advantage was because the young horse was connected by a rope to the saddle horn on the snubbing horse, if the young horse tried to bolt off, the snubbing horse could stop it.

After all the work we have done—sacking them out around their sides, putting tarps on them, and shaking plastic bags over the top of them—by the time we get on, the horse should be pretty quiet. However, if you have a horse who is sensitive around her sides even after all that and you just want to make sure the horse is safe when you get on, then first do the exercises I talked about in Month 7, Part 2: Use Mr. Jeans to simulate the weight of the rider in the saddle with his legs bumping along her sides, pull on the saddle horn with a rope as the horse moves to represent a rider shifting weight in the saddle, and do the mounting exercises. All of these exercises add another piece to the foundation training so that we make that first ride as safe as possible. Up until about fifteen years ago, I would get on anyway, and if the horse bucked I would just ride it out—turn her nose in or do change of directions. What I learned from this, though, was that it was easier on the horse and the rider to add more steps to the training process. All these steps I've mentioned could be done in one round pen session, depending on your horse's personality and how well you have done your groundwork.

In this next photo sequence, we are using a 7-year-old stallion named Remi whom we rescued from near starvation. He was halter broke but otherwise untrained—again, a good foundation Quarter horse stock with a good mind.



Remi when he first came to us.

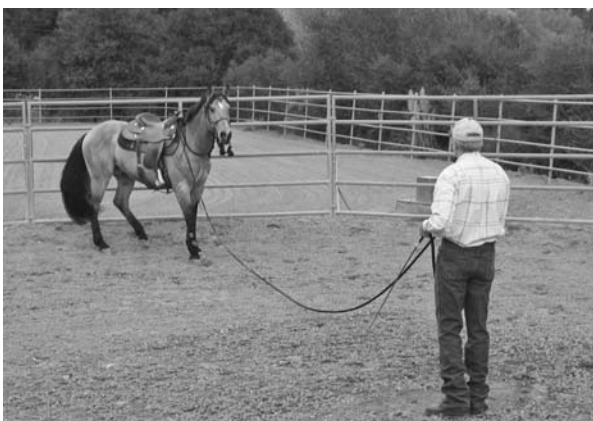


Using Mr. Jeans.



Using the rope on the saddle horn doing change-of-direction exercises.





Working with giving to pressure as if in the saddle.



Note the line snap on the halter and not the bit and that the reins are wrapped out of the way.

For the first ride, I ask my assistant trainer, Lisa, to be the passenger and I am the handler or snubbing horse on the ground. I attach a 30-foot line to the cowboy halter because the horse has learned to give to pressure and yield to it. We do the session in the round pen because it is a safer environment, but you can also do it in an arena if you don't have a round pen. You want to do this ride in an enclosed area in case the horse tries to escape down the driveway. I have started a lot of horses without a round pen and found you can do the same thing with line work.

I ask the rider to step in the stirrup on the horse's left side and step down, step up, and step down again, each time increasing the weight in the stirrup. Then I ask the rider to stand up in the stirrup and lean over and pet the neck. We then duplicate this on the other side of the horse. Depending on the horse, you might have to repeat this process a few times on each side. Next I tell the rider to throw up a leg up over the saddle so that the horse can feel the weight, and as soon as she sits down I tell her to dismount to take the pressure off. We repeat this same process on the other side, or off side.

Most babies haven't learned how to stand square and support your weight when you mount up. Sometimes when a 150-pound person mounts on a smaller unbroken horse, the horse moves around because she is off balance. To cause the horse to reposition her feet into a little wider stance, take the left rein in

your left hand and bring it up to the horn, place your right hand on the cantle of the saddle, and rock the horse back and forth. I recommend you do this for the first few rides if needed.

Now the rider can mount and stay in the saddle. I then lead the horse off for a couple steps on the left side and tell the rider to dismount to allow the horse to regain her composure and to take the pressure off. At this point, you can check your cinch because the saddle may have loosened up. I am often asked how tight my cinch should be. I want it snug enough to keep the saddle on but not so tight that I am almost cutting the horse in half. This is putting too much pressure on the horse; remember, the girth area is sensitive. After you adjust the cinch because the horse lost air, walk the horse out without the rider for a few steps. This is very important to do, even if you have to trot or canter the horse out to relax her. It is surprising how a horse can react to her cinch being retightened.

Mount again, going through the same mounting exercise I just described. Don't assume that because you went through this process once you don't need to do it again. I recommend repeating this process for the next four to six rides. It might take you ten minutes for the first six rides and then by the seventh ride, or whenever you feel it is appropriate, you may spend only a couple of minutes doing this process.

Next, I lead the horse off in a different direction. You do this to make sure the horse is comfortable being led in both directions. I have had horses get nervous and want to bolt off even though we did all the preliminary groundwork. But because I taught the horse to give to pressure, to do landings (send the horse off and stopped her feet), change directions, and give to pressure even when her emotional level was up, I could bring her nose in, stop her feet, and move the hindquarters over.

How long this process takes depends on the horse. Of course, with Jaz I never did this; instead, I put my reputation on the line at Paso Robles. My problem with Jaz was that I couldn't get her to move her feet! This is a common problem I have when first riding these horses because I get them so relaxed they don't care when you bump with your leg to move them forward. It's not that they're frozen from fear; they are just very comfortable. Well, that's a good thing!

With the horse on the line and the rider in the saddle, I stand about 5 to 12 feet from the horse and send her out at a walk to the left using my horseman's cane. At this point the rider is just a passenger holding on to the saddle horn and going with the horse. The rider is holding the reins loosely but not trying to guide the horse or pull on the reins.



I am holding Remi while Lisa steps and puts weight in the stirrup.



Lisa steps up and waits.



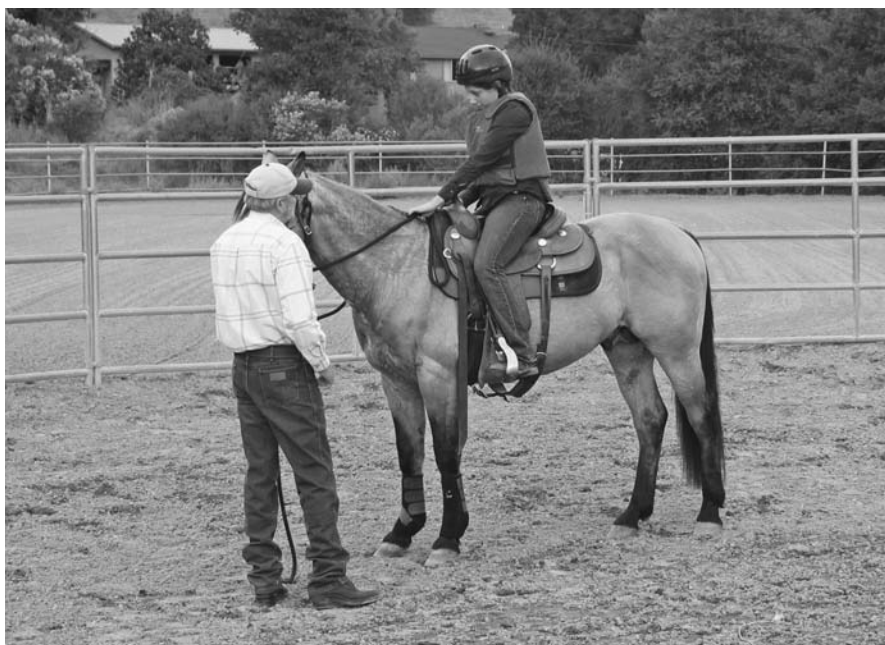
Lisa steps up . . .



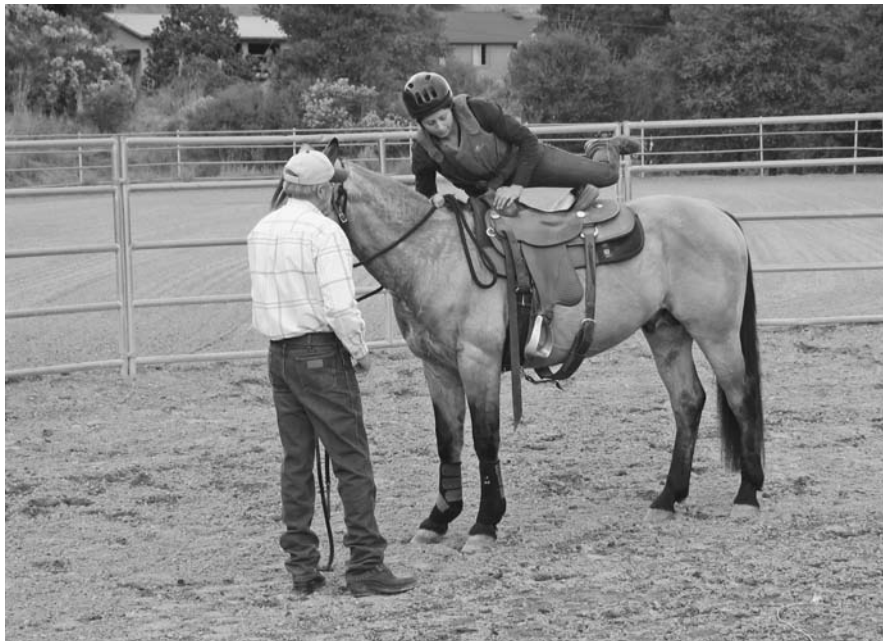
. . . And reaches over and pats his neck.



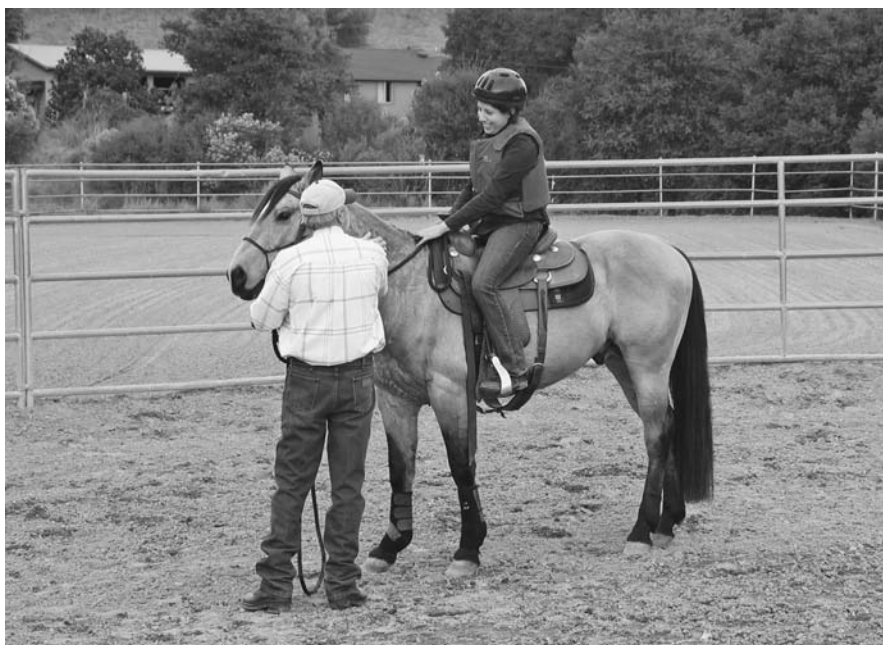
Lisa swings up.



Lisa sits down.



Lisa swings off on the opposite side.



Back in the saddle preparing to be led off by me.



I am now leading.

I send the horse out to the rail to trot and canter and then ask for a change of direction. We have done this many times so it should be no big deal. I ask for a trot and then I tell the rider to say the magic word, “whoa,” to halt the horse. If the horse doesn’t stop, I say whoa and have the horse change directions. We keep repeating this until I think the horse is relaxed, meaning after she stops she is not jumping into a trot. Then I will ask for a canter. Almost all the time, we do the walk, trot, and canter on the line. Once the horse is comfortable, I ask the passenger to become a rider even though the line is still attached. So, say the horse is lunging right, the rider will pick up on the right rein, add the left rein, and ask to change directions to the inside. We will repeat this process to the left and right, work on the stop, and the backup. My part in this is to reinforce what the rider is asking. For example, if the rider asks the horse to move forward by clucking and then adding leg, but the horse does not understand the leg, I would follow up with the go-forward cue on the ground. This trains the horse to understand that the cluck and leg from the rider are pre-cues. Another example is if the rider wants the horse to go left and picks up the left rein to direct it but the horse doesn’t respond. Because I have taught it the inside turn and moving the shoulder over on the ground, I can reinforce this. We do this exercise six to eight laps.



Start of the line work and change-of-direction series on the line with me.





Inside turn to the right.





When you think the horse is ready, you can take the horse off the line and let the rider work at liberty. I still stand in the middle of the round pen with the horseman's cane. We repeat asking for the various gaits and change of direction but we can now ask for the outside turn. For the outside turn, we first ask for the trot (this gait has more momentum) and make an inside turn to take it off the rail by 5 feet and then turn the horse into the rail. If the horse needs a little help, I can ask the shoulder to move over. When we ask for the outside turn, we are getting control of the nose and the shoulder, and from the hip we get forward movement. Let's say the horse starts to turn but stalls and stops. I go to the hip to drive the hindquarters forward. We continue to do this until soon, the rider is now making inside and outside turns. Because we already have done this in the round pen, it usually doesn't take the horse long if we use the same cues to learn this. By the third or fourth rides, we can ask the horse to do figure eights. We have had some horses with whom we have done a good job on the ground training and they were good-minded enough that we could ride out of the round pen down to the covered arena. Normally, though, we spend about four sessions in the round pen before we ask the horse to venture out of the covered arena. The horse should be fine with this because earlier we did our groundwork in various locations.



Off-line now doing the same change-of-direction exercises working on inside and outside turns.







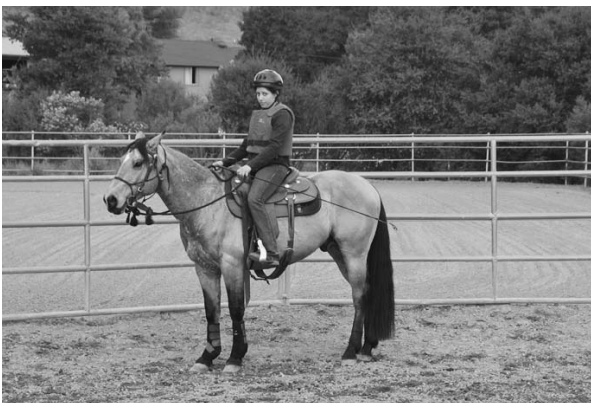




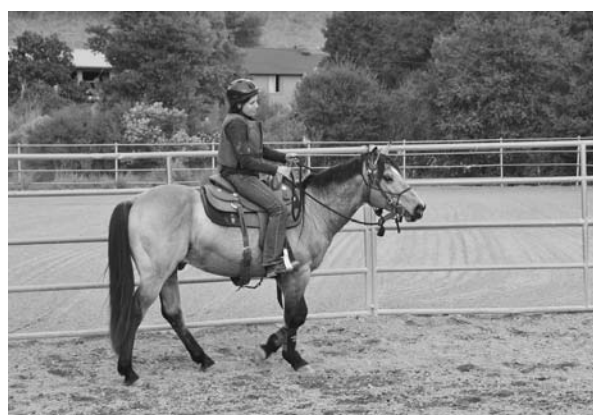
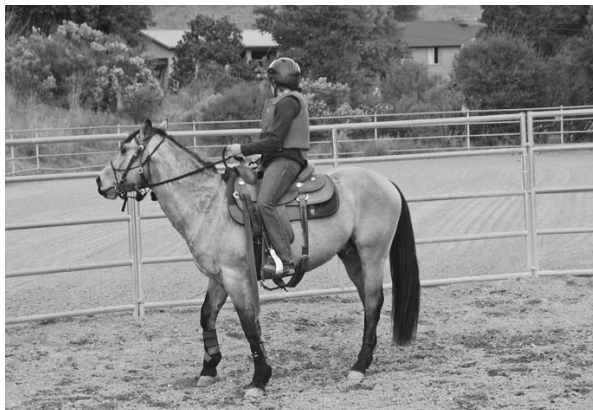
Lisa, using the same cues that I have on Jaz, opens the reins and leg as Remi comes into the inside turn as I cue him from the center.



Working on the back up.



Dressage stick position.



Outside turn sequence—note Lisa looking into the turn.



Another outside turn—note Lisa's seat, leg, and rein position.

TEACHING YOUR HORSE TO GUIDE

The next location we work the horse is in our large covered arena. The benefit about riding a horse in a bigger area is that you will probably get more forward movement. It's fine if you don't have a covered arena; just work in an enclosed area. You must determine when you think this is comfortable for you to do.

We start with groundwork in the arena, doing change-of-direction exercises to make sure the horse is mentally thinking about us—how it responds to pressure and doesn't get upset, for example, because it has two days off—and working through any emotional issues before we get on. Most of the time even on broke horses, if the horse has been laid up for three to four days with a turn out or two, an owner will have a handful if he or she saddles it up and gets right on without doing groundwork. Change-of-direction exercises are a tool to see how your horse is doing that day emotionally and how she is tracking (is she lengthening or shortening her stride, indicating lameness?). I do these exercises even on my finished horses. I might do them for only ten to twenty minutes, depending on how emotional or heavy (if she is leaning on the line) the horse is. Another exercise you may want to do is sacking out with your horseman's cane and a plastic bag attached to it. Other good exercises are flapping your stirrups around the horse's sides, and pulling on the saddle to rock it.

Controlling the Hips

After you have finished the groundwork, do the mounting exercises again. Now you are ready for hip exercises. We have done this multiple times on the ground in concentrated circles; when the horse was soft and bending we took

the left rein with our hand just below the snap and moved our hand in the direction we wanted the hip to move over. Once you're ready to ride, you will do moving the hip over again.

Why repeat this? Well, when you first ride your horse, she may try to squirm out from beneath you, especially once you ride in the arena, which will encourage more forward movement. When this happens, you can either let the horse run out or gently pick up the rein and point the nose toward the rail to break the speed. This is called a *one-rein stop*. The goal is to have the horse move her hips around until she is quiet, not disengaged or stopped but quiet. This is similar to a turn on the forehand, except we use more inside rein and therefore have more bend in the neck. A traditional turn on the forehand is where the rear haunches circle around the front feet. The front feet don't move but step in place and there is no bend in the shoulder. In addition, you use an inside and outside rein to accomplish this. The inside rein directs the hips in the direction you want them to go and the outside rein is supporting or blocks the shoulder from moving forward or sideways. The one-rein stop displaces the negative energy into positive energy and later on will allow us to do lead changes, leg yields, and open up gates.

We can also use this exercise to steer our horse. For example, if you want to go right and her nose is going right but her shoulder is going left, you could use the right rein to move the hip over.

To get your horse to move her hips over you must know where to position your leg. There are three spots on the horse you can control with your leg: Spot one is in front of the cinch and controls the shoulder; spot two is near the cinch and controls both the shoulders and the hind quarters; and spot three is behind the cinch and controls the hind quarters. Your horse won't respond to them until a few weeks or maybe a month down the road after you practice then weekly, depending on the horse and on how much time you invest in this exercise.

To move the hips over, pick up on the rein that you know will be lightest or least resistant for the horse—say, for this example, it is the right one. Put your right leg back as a pre-cue, start shortening the right rein to get a bend in the neck, and hold it until you feel the hips move over—it could be a half step or a step—and then release all your aids. Do this every time you get on your horse, and practice this on both sides. This exercise is especially good to do if the horse is nervous since it changes the negative energy into positive energy and relaxes the horse.

Do this until the horse gets significantly better and then change to the other side. In the old days moving the hips over was called bending/doubling your horse. If my horse wouldn't give, especially with a hackamore, I would take the left rein, pull the nose around, bump with my left leg, and keep the hips moving until the horse softened up. Moving the hips over has multiple purposes; it is useful as a one-rein stop, causing forward movement, or guiding the horse for a change of direction.



Move the hips over with your leg.



Catch the nose as you move out.



Relax and go forward.



Move the hips over using the rein.



Hips come around.



Catch the nose as you move out.



Relax and go forward.

Used as a one-rein stop I get control of the horse's nose, such as if the horse spooks. We can also use this stop to control the horse's speed, say, if it is trotting too fast.

Moving the hips creates forward movement and allows me to guide the horse. As I stated earlier, the horse becomes so relaxed and comfortable with foundation training that it doesn't feel like moving. For a demonstration in Paso Robles, I worked with a horse for two days to get her to relax because she either wanted to freeze up with fear or buck. By the time I got her comfortable emotionally, she got so relaxed I had to work outside the round pen because I couldn't get any movement even when tapping her with a dressage stick! So, I took her into a large arena that was about 150 by 300 feet, and I still had difficulties getting her to go forward. Near the end of my demonstration I did get her to move a few steps. I don't see this as an issue because over time you won't have to work at it so much to get the movement you want.

Once you get your horse to move forward consistently, it doesn't matter if she goes straight or not; you can move the hips over to change directions. To do this, move the hips over and point her head in the new direction you want to go. For example, if I want the horse to go left and the horse doesn't want to go left, I use my left rein and move the hips to the right to point my horse's head to the left, making a 90-degree turn. Don't worry if it is not perfect. If you continue doing this, the guiding will get better and better.

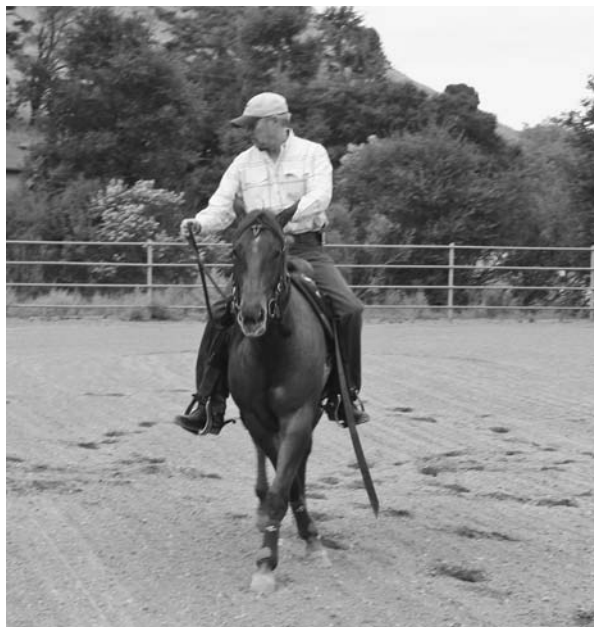
When the horse is moving the hips over without resisting, you can go to the square exercise I did with Jaz. Steer the horse straight, then ask the horse to move her hips over to do a 90-degree turn and go straight again. Do this on both sides. At first your straight lines may not be straight and that's fine; it may take you two or three sessions to teach this.

Gaining Shoulder Control

After this lesson you can teach your horse to guide and to get shoulder movement. Remember how we taught the horse to do an inside turn and then an outside turn to change directions in the round pen? This is what we are going to do next, now that we have control of her feet, she is moving forward consistently, and she is listening to our leg as a pre-cue when we squeeze or bump it. For this exercise your horse should be going into the turn and out of the turn with forward energy. To begin, start moving forward with energy about 5 or 6 feet off the rail, tip the nose left into the rail (don't create a big bend in the neck), and add the outside (right) rein and outside (right) leg. Take both reins toward the hip of the horse in an upward direction, at about a 45-degree angle. Don't pull the right rein over the neck. Once the horse has made the change of direction, ask her to continue to go forward with energy. At this point the horse can lose forward momentum, which means she stalls out like a car. If this happens, use your forward cue (bump with your leg or tap with your dressage stick) to go into a trot after the turn, not during or before the turn. Trotting after the turn is something the horse does not want to do; remember, most horses are lazy. This teaches the horse to go into the turn next time with more



Open your leg in the direction you are turning, open the rein on that side, close your leg on the opposite side, and look into the turn.



Again, open rein and leg, look into the turn, and close leg and rein on the opposite side.

energy or she will have to trot again. It may take your horse two or three times before she gets it.

Once you are going in the new direction, go straight down the rail. Take the right rein to the right to guide your horse to the right. Take the left rein straight back against the horse's neck to block any movement to the left and apply your left leg to ask the horse to move her shoulders over perhaps one step or two. When you get 4 or 5 feet off the rail, turn the nose in and if the horse stalls out, ask her to go into a trot. Open up the left rein and add your right rein and leg to get your horse to move diagonally to the left and turn your horse into the rail again.

I recommend you do this for about ten or fifteen minutes per session. Depending on how good a job you did with the groundwork, your horse may or may not get this in one session, or even a week or two. If you keep doing this consistently, your horse will soon understand when you add pressure with your leg it is a pre-cue to move the shoulder over. With more training she will soon learn to turn when you just tip your rein right or left, and you will no longer have to bump the horse with your leg.

Next you can open up the diagonal even more. Instead of bringing the horse 4 or 5 feet off the rail, you can bring her off 6 or 7 feet, and then 7 or 8 feet, and then 9 or 10 feet, and soon you end up doing a figure eight with bigger bends. In the beginning, I limit myself to an area in the center of my covered arena where the horse feels comfortable and there are not a lot of distractions. This is preferable to immediately trying to get your horse to go down the long rail at 100 feet where there are spooky areas—cars parking and people getting out of them and slamming the car doors. Remember, this is a green horse; you don't want to force her into new surroundings. What I do is gradually expand out of this safe area. So if we have been doing this at a 50- to 75-foot length along the rail, I will lengthen the trot work to get further down the rail so we are opening our circle up to 20 feet before I change direction. I keep expanding out so that eventually I am using the entire arena and the change-of-direction work is done in the center of the arena.



Go forward.



Open to the right.



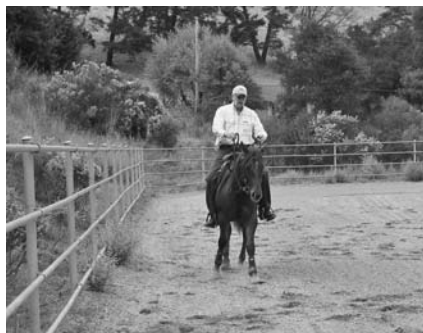
Come around to the right.



Open to the left.



Come around to the left.



Go forward.



Repeat; open to the right to come around using the fence to help close the circle.

To break up the routine, you can ask for a stop by dropping your heels, which causes your hip pockets to sink deeper into the saddle, and saying “whoa.” If the horse doesn’t stop, pick up the reins to stop her and ask her to back up one or two steps and then go forward again. We need to do this so that the go-forward cue and stop are reinforced.

By Jaz’s twenty-fifth ride, I was asking her to leg yield and side pass a few steps and rode her bridle-less all over the ranch with just a rope around her neck. Most horses could probably do this, although I am not encouraging it unless you are an experienced rider. People ask me when you know you can ride bridle-less. I know when I think I have control of the horse. First, I know when the horse is stopping off of a pre-cue (either saying “whoa” or sitting deeper in the saddle), and is not by pulling on the reins. If the horse is not doing this, then there is no way I will ride without the bridle. Second, the horse moves off

of pre-cues, my leg right or left. With Jaz, I direct her with the neck rope and add my leg and she moves in that direction. She also moves off my leg to go forward. We have walked, trotted, and even did a little canter work bridle-less.

It's the same thing as knowing when to take a baby out on the trail. I won't do this unless I feel I have some kind of control of the horse's feet. This means the horse is responsive, though not perfectly, to moving her hips over, to turning right or left, to stopping with the rein, and to backing up. If I feel I don't have this control, I won't go out on the trail. Remember when you first learned how to drive a car? Your parents or instructor didn't immediately take you out on busy streets. They practiced with you first in a quieter area, and only when you demonstrated that you had enough control of the car did they take you out on a busy city street. Also, because some horses are more emotional than others, I might wait a couple of weeks before I got out on that first trail ride. I don't mind the horse being a little nervous or spooky, but I do mind if I don't have control of the horse's nose and feet.

On Jaz's twenty-sixth ride after her groundwork, I rode her bridle-less in the outside arena and over logs we had set up. This month Jaz also had a little summer fun: trail riding, cooling off in a small creek that runs through my ranch, and riding English with a client of mine.



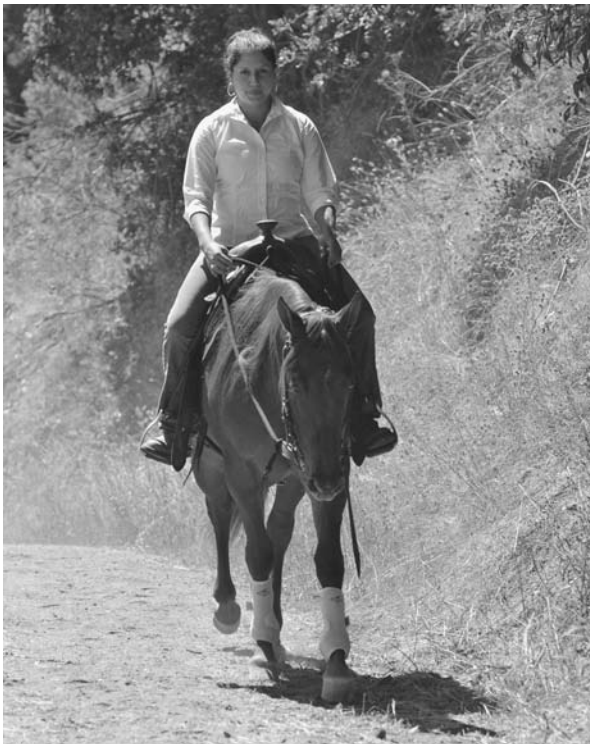
Riding Jaz with a halter.



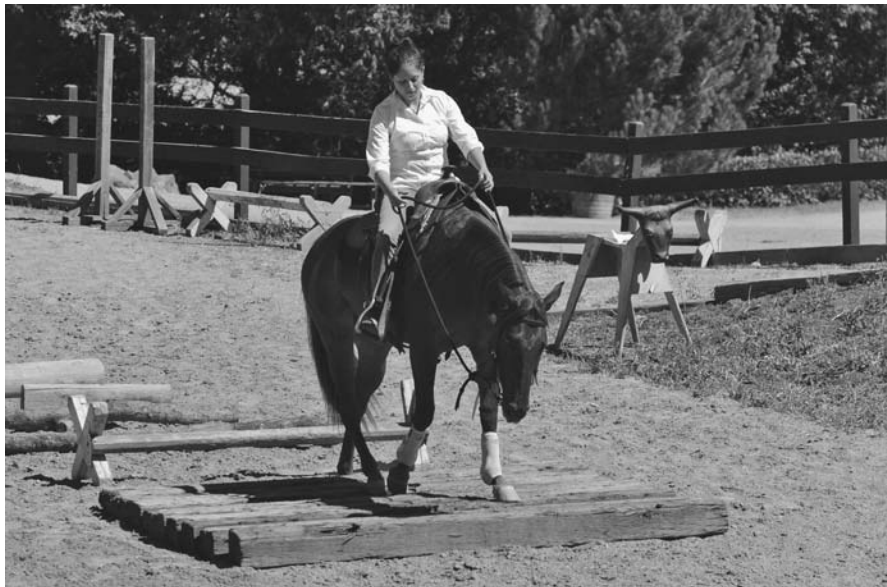
Riding Jaz on the trail for the first time.



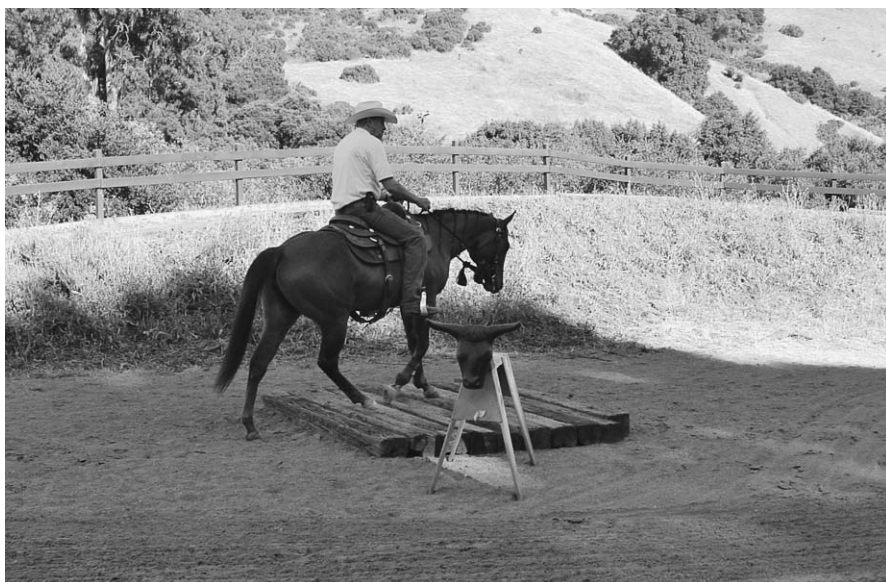
Riding around the ranch.



Lisa on the trail.



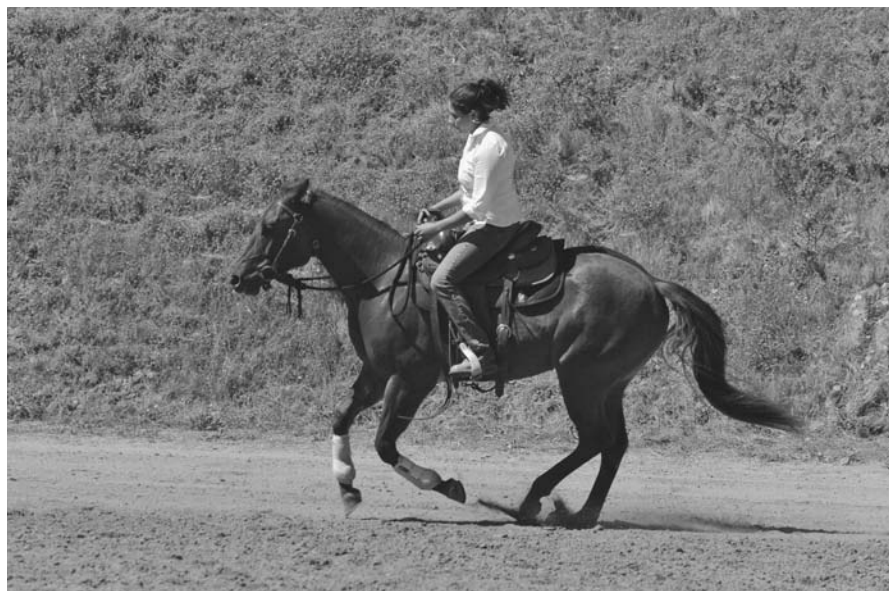
Lisa crossing poles.



I am crossing poles.



First creek crossing.



Lisa cantering.



Jaz goes English with client Mackenzie Gibbs.

Training Month 10

The Mental Side of Horsemanship

July has arrived, and I want to focus on a training aspect we sometimes overlook: the mental state of a rider. Our state of mind is critical, and something most of us clinicians and trainers spend far too little time addressing. To be a good trainer, you must have a positive, realistic attitude about your skills, be able to focus your mind and block out distractions, learn to adjust aspects of your personality to your horse's personality, have clear goals, and control your fear and anger. With the right mental attitude and practice, not only can you become a better trainer, but you can also develop your skills at concentrating and focusing.

This month I had a lot going on and found occasionally that my internal distractions—worrying about repairs going on at the ranch, when the hay truck was coming in—were so bad that I finally had to quit the exercise I was doing with Jaz and get off. Usually, when I put my foot in the stirrup it is almost an automatic cue focuses me on what I am doing. But this time I couldn't clear the distractions from my mind, which doesn't happen very often.

When you ride a young horse, like Jaz, you cannot be distracted and tense. You must be focused the entire time and basically "ride the horse every step." You cannot assume the horse will do something automatically, because she doesn't have the training experience. You must be mentally alert, exercise a lot of patience, and be sure you follow through on what you are doing. Because my frustrations were getting to me, I found that my aids were stronger than they would normally be. I caught myself, got off Jaz, and put her away for the day because I did not have a positive mind-set and was not open and able to connect with her. As I said, this does not happen to me very often. So if you have moments like these, instead of fighting them, which may cause you to be less patient and too strong with your horse, give yourself and your horse a break and quit for the day.

RECOGNIZE YOUR ABILITIES

First, I believe that riders should train themselves to think positively about their horsemanship skills. We must believe absolutely in what we are able to do. And that means recognizing what our abilities actually are, no matter the level. Once you know what your abilities are, you need to recognize what you do well and what you need to improve on. If we do something well, we need to acknowledge this and take credit for the positive things we do. Sometimes we dwell on our shortcomings and don't take enough credit for the positive things we do.

At the same time, we have to bring into account negativity. Why negativity? Because while we want to be extremely positive about our own abilities, we also have to be realistic about where the horse is in her own training. Once we are truly aware of both the positives and the negatives of both the horse and ourselves and how we interact together, we need not to become overly attached to those ideas and allow them to interfere with our intentions, meaning the exercises we have planned.

TRAIN YOURSELF TO BE FOCUSED

Clear intentions in training are vital. We must identify what we intend our goals to be, and that includes where to start, how to get there, and where to end. We absolutely have to prepare our mental state to stay focused on these goals rather than to react to the environment around us or to internal thoughts we are having or what the horse is doing.

Block Out External Distractions

For example, an arena where we train our horse can be a noisy, distracting environment. You may be working with your horse and have another horse get totally out of control, or hear another rider shouting, or you may hear a conversation going on in the background. We must train ourselves not to pay attention or get emotionally involved in the distracting things around us, but instead to stay utterly focused on the horse we are working with and to treat those distractions as just background noise. Find your center and stay on track with your own work. If you don't allow yourself to get distracted, you will find that your horse is much less likely to get distracted as well. If you are focused, your horse will be focused—it really is that straightforward.

Block Out Internal Distractions

Sometimes our own internal thoughts can distract us. You may find during a training session with your horse that you are having trouble concentrating. Usually I can stay focused for a very long time with a horse, but at times I have caught myself losing focus because stray thoughts intrude. When that happens, I stop the horse and complete that thought process. I find that the more I fight against it, the more it gains strength and I become more attached to it and frustrated.

So how do we become better at focusing on a task? Strengthening our ability to focus is similar to the process of strengthening our muscles through weight lifting. If you can bench press, say, 100 pounds and you want to work up to lifting 200 pounds, you wouldn't try to lift 200 pounds right away. You have to build up your muscles to work up to that weight. It's the same thing with mental training. I find that many of my clients are more successful at training themselves to focus if they build on it slowly. For example, if you can stay focused for five minutes, then set a goal for staying focused for another minute beyond that. Then after six minutes, stop focusing, continue the thought (such as the things you have to do, like grocery shopping, picking up the kids, running errands) and then go back to working with the horse again.

BE CLEAR IN YOUR INTENTIONS

Many people don't recognize what intention really means in terms of horsemanship, and yet that really is the magic in training. The *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* defines intention as "A course of action that one intends to follow. An aim that guides action; an objective." So when we are clear in our minds as to what our intentions are, our goals about how to achieve those intentions become clear as well.

When I am teaching at clinic, I am focusing on the horse in front of me and on the lesson I am trying to teach. Internally, I am visualizing what I want the horse to do. I am not worrying about what the audience is thinking or concerned about what the horse is doing or not doing. This is called being "in the groove" or "one with your horse." The horse reads my body language—the positioning of my body—and my tone of voice, making my intentions very clear and allowing the magical communication to happen with the horse. We are having an internal dialogue with each other.

Here's another example. When out trail riding, if your intention is to turn right and go through a gate, you need to already see yourself doing it in your mind's eye before you actually begin doing it. Some difficulty may come in the

horse not understanding or getting confused, but if you stay focused on going through the gate as you imagine it, it greatly helps to give the horse purpose. One of the things that we have talked about before is that with any exercise we do, we have to be able to picture doing every step. So imagine riding up to the gate, stepping, pivoting, going through the gate, stepping, pivoting to close the gate, and moving out away from the gate. If we cannot picture it, we will not be successful. If you can only see yourself going through the gate, then that's all you should do. Only do what you can actually perceive. Adjust your goals to meet your own ability to imagine.

REMAIN FOCUSED ON TRAINING GOALS

Another important aspect of your own mental training is not to get involved in the negative behavior of the horse. For example, if I have a rude, belligerent horse, I do not get caught up in the negative behavior. I remain focused on the goals of the training only. If we are working in the round pen and the horse is bolting or charging, I am focused only on getting the response I want, which is for the horse to be relaxed, to have rhythm, balance, cadence, and to want to be with me. I am not worrying about the other behaviors; I'm just focused on what I need to do to achieve my goals. And frankly, that's often just a question of time, which is irrelevant to a horse. They operate on their own time. But again, the mental image is key. You have to imagine the behavior and response you intend to get from the horse. It's the same with real estate. You can go out and look at a house as it is, or see it as it's meant to be. Do you get caught up in seeing a brown lawn and peeling paint, or can you imagine the house after you have worked on it and see how it *could* look? It's vital to learn to use our imagination to succeed; that's available to everyone, but we just don't seem to use it often with our horses.

WORK WITH YOUR FEAR

Fear and intimidation are very normal feelings when being around horses! My clients generally range from 35 to 55 years old. When they were kids, these people didn't have as much fear because they felt bulletproof. But as they got older and more mature, and maybe got hurt a few times, they started thinking about their mortality. Most of my clients, including myself, don't want to recognize this fear. But we have to recognize this and accept it because a little fear can be positive and keep us safe. We shouldn't bury it, but we must learn to separate ourselves from it. A lot of young trainers get really complacent and feel

that they too are bulletproof, and then they get hurt. And anytime you get hurt with a horse you will lose an edge, and this really affects you mentally. Horses are large animals, and any large animal can be dangerous. That's why we do the foundation training in a safe way, to stack the odds in our favor.

At the same time, however, we should learn not to react to this fear. It's a fallacy to say, "The horse senses your fear." The horse doesn't sense your fear, but your body's *reaction* to the fear. The horse doesn't know what is going on inside your head but she can feel your physical reaction, your body language. When we are fearful, our legs clamp on the horse's side and our lower back tightens up. All of this interferes with the movement of the horse. It may confuse a younger horse and cause a negative reaction. For example, if she's jumpy about her sides being touched and you are clamping with your legs, you will cause her to become nervous and want to bolt. I am sixty now, yet I still get on babies. I have a healthy dose of fear but the babies don't know it because I have trained my body to relax. When I get on, my legs are relaxed and my lower back is relaxed and I am able to perform effectively. You need to learn to do this as well.

LEARN TO ACCOMMODATE THE HORSE

Usually we want the horse to accommodate or change her personality to suit ours. But the horse cannot accommodate us; we have to accommodate the horse. We have to be willing to adjust ourselves to the horse's temperament. For example, if you have a high-energy horse who is very nervous, like a thoroughbred born to race, and you are high energy, you have to learn to lower your emotional level and become calm and quiet. If you are an easygoing kind of person and you have a lethargic horse, you have to be willing to bring your energy level up.

Also if you have a tendency to get frustrated and want results now, you have to learn to curb your frustration. Frustration can result when we don't know the process, but if we learn the steps involved in the process, we can train ourselves to become less frustrated.

SET REALISTIC GOALS

As a professional or even just as a serious horse-lover, you have to be willing to take the extra step, whether to go into a show arena or out on the trail. You have to simply get on the horse one day and allow the practice of handling horses to take on its own life. But at some point you have to be willing to take that chance, to accept the risk. And to do that, you have to be able to imagine yourself doing it with crystal clarity.

This is an especially common problem with many riders who grew up around horses and return to horses as adults. They often feel like they want to give up, or they get overwhelmed quickly. And that's no surprise. It seemed so easy to ride when we were young, and falling off was never a big deal. Now that we are older and don't bounce as well, there is even more danger in handling and riding horses. So when you have those times of feeling overwhelmed or giving up, all it really means is that you need to back up in your relationship with the horse and return to the basics until you are more comfortable. Can that mean you may be doing just groundwork for six months? Maybe. So what? I have a client who was extremely fearful. She returned to riding in her late forties and got hurt trail riding shortly afterward. But rather than giving up, she spent a year working her horse from the ground, and then finally riding in the round pen, then the arena, and then around the end of that year, she went back out on the trail. She has been riding everywhere on the trail ever since! She did not give up. Instead, she reset her goals to be in line with what she could imagine herself doing. And slowly, as her confidence built, she was able to imagine becoming more and more ambitious in her goals. Finally she broke through the fear barrier altogether and is now living her dream with her horse.

It's easy to lose confidence when we push ourselves beyond what we can imagine ourselves doing. So have confidence in what your abilities truly are, define your intentions based on those abilities, imagine yourself accomplishing your intentions, and then stay completely focused on working with those goals every time you are with your horse.

Your mental state and preparation for your horse's training really is the most important thing that will determine your success, or your failures. What you can imagine yourself doing, you can achieve! So don't be afraid to dream big when it comes to your relationship with your horse. Believe in yourself, be patient, be persistent, and those dreams will come true.

Conclusion

Looking Back: You've Come a Long Way, Baby

As I reflect over the past ten months, I feel really good about the foundation training program I did with Jaz. I worked with Jaz two or three days per week, as would one of my busy clients, and during this time she learned a lot: accepting a halter, leading, line work, tying, de-spooking, and beginning saddle work. In addition, I have introduced Jaz to many new objects (tarps and leaf blowers) and taken her to new places (Paso Robles and Sacramento horse expos). The combination of her willing nature and the de-spooking training have molded Jaz into a horse who is calm, relaxed, and willing when going with me on these adventurous trips.

Many times people tell me that they can't work with their horse as much as they would like—five to six days per week like most trainers do. This is my answer: Don't worry about it and don't try to rush the process! You should not work a young horse like you do a fully mature one, because of her developing physical structure. Some trainers have overworked their 3-year-old reining horses so much that they have caused these horses physical damage; they now need hock injections and are mentally fatigued. A less-intense work schedule is better.

Throughout the training of Jaz, I did not ride her a lot because of the stage of her physical development. Toward the seventh month, Jaz really started developing quickly—she just grew up—from about 13 hands to over 14 hands at the withers and to over 15 hands at the hindquarters. (I am hoping that the withers will catch up.) This up-and-down type of growth process is normal on every baby. First the hindquarters grow up, then we hope the withers catch up, then the hindquarters grow up again and then the withers. When you get these growth spurts, you want to go slow and easy with your training. The way I look

at it is that I want to keep this young horse and enjoy her and have her be in my family for the rest of her life. I am not trying to make her into a 3-year-old champion reining horse prospect.

So how long will it take you to train your horse if you can work with her only two or three days per week? In theory, if I worked Jaz five days a week, it would accelerate the training more quickly. Say I did work a 2-year-old horse five days a week. By the time she was 3 years old, she would have good basic foundation training on her, meaning she has left or right lateral flexion, vertical flexion, and soft and responsive shoulder and hip control; can do leg yields and can side pass, stop, and back up; performs all three gaits in a relaxed manner; does upward and downward transitions; and is comfortable on the trail and crossing objects. If you did the same training only two or three days per week, this same horse, if she's good minded, might take four years to finish the foundation training. Or if she's not as complacent and trainable, she might be 5 or 6 years old by the time you finished the foundation training. The same training will happen, but it may take a little longer. Also, if you are training only a couple of days a week, you may have to repeat lessons more often. This is normal and fine. With horses you may always have to go back and reteach a lesson. So, don't think of this as a negative thing but as a training opportunity.

My goal when writing this book has been to provide helpful colt starting information on a doable schedule. I hope you found this book fun and enjoyable to read but with enough information to get some training work done with your horse; however, it is not meant to be a detailed training guide. So as I said earlier, if you find you are having any problems or need questions answered, be sure you get professional help or guidance.

Here is a summary of what we covered in our ten-month training program.

THE EARLY MONTHS

As I've mentioned, I prefer working with young horses at liberty in a round pen first. As you remember, I tried this with Jaz, but the pressure that was needed to get her to go forward caused her to want to go through the round pen rails. So I put a halter and line on her and worked her this way in the round pen. On a younger horse—a weanling up to a year old—halter training is one of the most important lessons you can do in a round pen. Horses who have not been halter broke sometimes resist, so learning to work with a halter is actually early resistance training. In the beginning, they can look like a fish out of water on a fishing line—they flop around on the end of the line if we are not careful. But

halter training soon becomes a very big and positive event in their lives and is very productive. It teaches learning to give to pressure in all areas of their body, including around their legs and sides. This is a very important part of foundation training. I have had horses in for training who have been barely halter broke and don't give to pressure, yet their owner wants me to get them ready to ride. This training has to be done first. So if you do not have a round pen, which certainly is my preference, you can still do a good job educating the horse mentally, physically, and emotionally.

Halter training is also needed to teach your young horse to tie. I just got a phone call from a fellow who gets his horses to lead and follow him. When they are at liberty, if he runs they follow, mirroring his moves. But anytime his horses' emotional level goes up and he pulls on their heads, they just dig their front feet in, their hindquarters drop down, and they won't budge. He has taught his horses to lead through his body language, which is important and we want all of our horses to do this, but his horses have not learned to give to pressure. So, when you try to tie up a horse like this, this is when you will find the holes in your training.

There are only two reasons a horse pulls back: Either she hasn't learned to give to pressure with a halter, or she has learned to give to pressure but resists when the emotional level is high and the flight instinct kicks in. That is why it is very important we do not just spend time leading a horse cuing off our body language, but also teach it to yield to the halter. Otherwise, when you try to tie that young horse and she becomes frightened, she can really hurt herself pulling back because we assumed she would not resist. That is why we spent the time in the earlier months teaching her to give to the halter and to tie.

My horse Tennison was about as broke as you can get as far as leading, tying, and giving to pressure. I had traveled across the country with him. But one time in Colorado when I tied him to the trailer, something startled him and he hit the line, which made him panic and break the lead rope. This situation caused me to develop post work; I wanted to change this reaction. I found that after working with horses using the post work exercise (see Month 2, "Earning Jaz's Respect and Teaching Her to Tie"), when they hit the end of the line, they gave to the pressure instead of panicking and hurting themselves.

There is no way I can guarantee that my combination of Ultimate Foundation Training and teaching a horse to tie through leading and the post work will keep any horse from ever pulling back. However, this training will enable us to change the horse's reaction. There may be a time when the horse hits the end of the line, but because of our previous work the horse won't panic but instead will give to the lead line.

THE MIDDLE MONTHS

De-spooking, or sacking out, allows you to bring your horse's emotional level down and teaches the horse to change her reaction. What is interesting about horses is that they can seem so smart as long as we are consistent and learn quickly, but when that flight instinct takes over they don't care what is in front of them, whether it is a barbed wire fence (they will go through it) or a cliff (they will go off it, with you on them). That is why we spend the time and use our imagination to produce a horse who doesn't react to everything that comes along. Or we change her flight instinct (bolting reaction) to spooking in place. I think of the emotions as being on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest and 1 being close to dead. A good, safe, rideable horse will be around a 2 or a 4. You may have heard the expression "dead-broke horse," meaning one you can do anything with and anyone can ride her. Well, I have never found a dead-broke horse! I have seen these same so-called dead-broke horses bolt and run too when they are frightened. There is always something out there that will scare a horse, so this type of training is very important.

I once took part in a colt-starting competition with four other trainers. Each of us had a different style of training. I just did what I get the horses at home to do: round pen training. I had the horse go forward in the round pen, stop, and then face me. As soon as the horse did this at the competition and I felt I could approach him, I put a halter on. I taught the horse to give to pressure on a lead line in both right and left directions. I got him to follow his nose by putting a rope around his hindquarters and had him follow the direction of the pull. Then I taught the horse to drag a tarp. I started putting ropes around his legs and around his belly like a cinch to prepare him for the saddle. I also introduced a big soccer ball and leaf blower to represent something noisy like a lawn mower, chainsaw, or weed whacker so that I could work on bringing the horse's emotional level up and then down. Most people work on bringing the emotions down, then when they find themselves in a situation that increases the emotional level, things get a lot more explosive. If we bring the emotional level up in a controlled environment—not on a trail 2 feet wide on the side of a hill—we are going to have a safer experience. By introducing scary objects in an arena, we are not waiting for something to cause the horse to react but are introducing them on our terms.

I do not just do this for showmanship; these are all the same things I do at the ranch. But the producer of the competition was upset and thought these were gimmicks and that this was not horsemanship. Horsemanship to me is considering the needs of the horse—having respect for the horse and working

with her until she is comfortable and safe—and respecting the needs of the passenger, the owner who is going to be riding her. Since most of my clients today are in their mid-thirties or older and are either returning to the sport or are new to it, they want to ride a horse they know is safe because they don't want to risk getting hurt. Clinicians can sack out a horse with a lariat, get her comfortable with a rope around her belly, throw a saddle on, and in less than an hour be on her back. But we are only stealing a ride, which means we can get on the horse but it doesn't mean she is fully trained or that she won't suddenly bolt. We are willing to take this risk, but my clients aren't.

When doing de-spooking exercises like tarp dragging, remember to do them in small increments. The horse will tell you where she is in her training; your horse is the best teacher. If you worked with a horse but she is still excited and wild-eyed, then you did something wrong and need to back up and fix it. By the end of an exercise, every horse with whom I have worked displays a quiet and relaxed demeanor.

THE LATER MONTHS

By the time you finish with the earlier ground exercises, when you put a saddle on it's not a big issue. However, it is very important to do the cinch exercises. Out of all the horses I have started and restarted, at least 50 percent of them have a buck in them when you first cinch them up and send them off on a line or round pen. I recently worked on the rope cinching exercises with one horse and I put the saddle on and off until the horse was comfortable. I then put the saddle on and cinched it as quickly and gently as I could. You want to do this to make sure that if the horse jumps the saddle will stay on and not slip around her belly. Well, this horse bucked violently; I hadn't seen a horse do this in a long time. This just goes to show you that even with all the work I did—sacking out, cinching, and saddle exercises—you just don't know. Even with a system like mine that eliminates 99 percent of this behavior, there is always one horse who needs more work.

We all have busy times when we can't work with our horse as much as we would like due to our family, illness, or work. If you have to board your horse and keep her in a paddock because there is no pasture to put your young horse in during the winter, find someone to help you turn her out so that she gets some kind of exercise. If you put your horse in with other hand-picked horses, you can also socialize your horse. Socialization with her own kind, another baby, or an adult horse is very important and should be part of your horse's

training program. It makes for a more well-rounded horse and affects her emotional and mental development.

When I first bought my horse Tennison at 18 months, he never had any kind of socialization at all. It took him several years to learn how to “be a horse”—to romp and play and rear and bite and chase other horses in a pasture or a corral. Horses are just like people in that if they are not socialized enough they do not know how to act around their own kind. With socialization a horse learns how to accept pressure and leadership better. An adult horse educates a youngster. Any time a puppy comes to the ranch, my dog Max, who is 4 years old, seems to think it is his job to teach the puppy manners; an older horse does the same thing. I use mares for this because they are usually good teachers. You just have to be careful which other horse you are matching your horse up with, since not every horse is a good match and you don't want your horse hurt. We do this regularly at the ranch when a horse comes in for training and have never had any major problems or accidents other than a horse maybe giving or getting a nip here and there. I actually have seen more horses get hurt by themselves than when they are with others. We try to match up two to three horses in the large turnouts so that they get plenty of socialization. You can even do this with stallions, instead of hiding them in the back corner away from world. In fact, I match up the stallions with a gelding to socialize. I find socialization can reduce any bad stallion behavior, such as biting, striking, and becoming easily aggravated.

If you only have one horse and board your horse at home, how do you socialize her? Try to get your horse out with others at trail rides or horse shows. Some of my clients have adopted or bought rescue horses with lameness problems to provide companionship for their horse. This way, not only can you save a life by adopting a horse who normally wouldn't be adoptable, but you can also make your horse happy. I have also had clients who have gotten a goat to provide companionship for their horse and have seen the two animals romp and play together.

FIRST RIDES AND BEYOND

Don't be too demanding in your first two or three rides. You just want the horse to learn to be comfortable with you on her back. When you teach your horse how to guide, you may look like you are all over the place, but if you stay focused with a game plan and can imagine your horse guiding correctly, your horse will improve.

Older or younger horses can become confused during a lesson. That is why it is important to be consistent with our training and ask with a lot of patience. Some horses catch on more quickly than others do, just like people, so we have to be tolerant with them.

Once you feel comfortable, it's good to mix up your training routine by going out on the trail or doing something different in the arena. There's a young girl at my ranch who we all adore, who does a little reining, rides in Western pleasure or English classes, and who has a nice little Quarter horse. One day she put a small English saddle on Jaz with a pink blanket and took her over several cavelletis, a series of height-adjustable wooden jumps for schooling horses. I have taken Jaz over cavelletis on a line but never rode her over them, so this was different for her. But she went over them just fine. This let us mix up the routine and do different things instead of always doing the riding exercises, which can get very boring. These exercises need to be done, but we should have fun with our horses and we need to make the lessons enjoyable for the horse.

We all want our horses to be versatile in the arena and on the trail. To build your horse's talents, I suggest that later, when your horse gets better and better with simple exercises, you introduce new lessons, such as leg yields, diagonals, and counter arc bends. You can also work on crossing objects or do a lot of walk, trot, and canter transitions to make your horse more versatile.

I explain many of these exercises in my book *Building Your Dream Horse*. In addition, you can find more information on my Web site, www.charleswilhelm.com, where there are helpful articles and DVDs. In addition, read lots of general horsemanship books and go to clinics. Every bit of new knowledge will help you be more successful with your baby.

A WORD ON HOOF CARE

One important element in your baby's care is hoof care. Start your baby's hoof care early, as soon as your foal will allow you to handle her feet. You can save a lot of conformation problems by trimming early on. Jaz was out in the pasture for a year and nothing was done to her feet during that time that I am aware of. I had to do corrections to her feet and they have come along just fine; however, it would have been easier if I could have trimmed her feet right away and checked that the hoof angles were correct. Sometimes a hoof grows upright and boxy instead of at angle like a normal hoof. This is called a clubfoot. If you start correcting this while she's young, depending on the degree of clubfootedness,

by the time you get ready to get into the saddle, you will hardly be able to tell the horse had a clubfoot.

There is a controversy about bare versus shod feet. I have a couple of horses at the ranch whose feet are like iron. When they are ridden up and down the trail, their feet hold up just great. However, the majority of horses' hooves, in my opinion about 75 percent, don't hold up this well because of poor conformation of the feet due to breeding or neglect, so the horse needs shoes. Each breed has certain hoof problems. Racehorses have a tendency to grow a lot of toe and have low-slung heels. A lot of the Quarter horses used as halter horses in the show world have small feet. Work with your farrier to determine if your horse requires shoes.

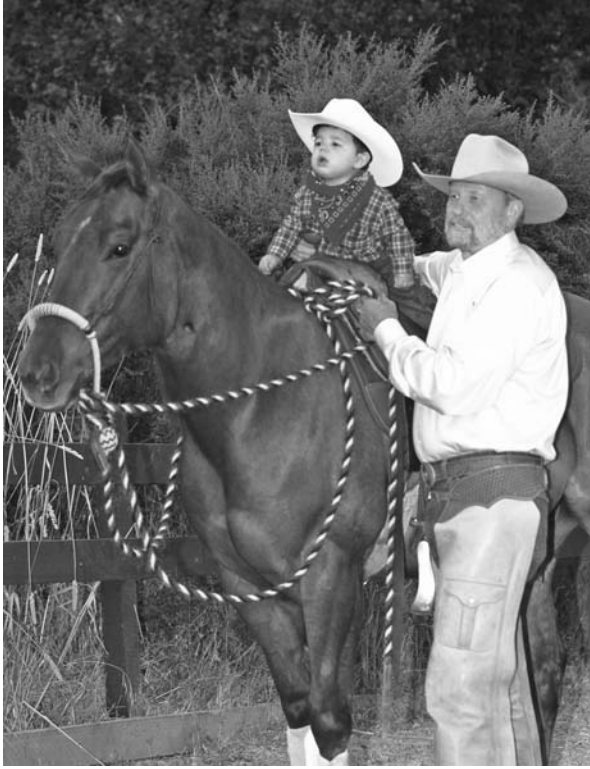
The general rule is to have trimming done every six to eight weeks, with eight weeks being the longest you should go. Through experience I have learned that the bigger the shoe you can put on your horse, the better. A lot of time farriers may want to put on a smaller shoe because it is less likely to being pulled off. I call this cowboy shoeing. On a large ranch when a cowboy is out riding doing ranch work with his horse, he can't afford to have a shoe come off. I have had farriers tell me a larger shoe will not cause the hoof to grow. That's true—it won't cause it to grow, but when it does grow it allows the hoof to expand naturally. On one of my own horses the base of the hoof was actually getting smaller than the coronary band (the upper part of the hoof). What was happening was that the farrier kept putting a smaller and smaller shoe on the horse. This was back when I didn't have as much information on hoof care. So it really *behooves* you to be well informed about hoof care.

I recommend that you check with your vet and that the farrier do what the vet has recommended. The two of them should work together as a team. If the farrier is not communicating with you about what he or she is doing with your horse, consider getting a different farrier. You are the boss; this is your horse in whom you have invested a lot of time and money.

GOOD-BYE FOR NOW

Well, I hope you enjoyed reading about my ten-month training journey with Jaz. Jaz is a wonderful horse and a great equine partner. One day I am sure some of you will get to see her in action at a clinic or a horse expo. I look forward to showing you what she can do.

I am confident that if you follow the training exercises in this book, you too can have success with your horse. The key is to diligently work with your baby, be consistent, have lots of patience, and don't hesitate to get help if you need it. With that, I hope you have a wonderful experience with your horse. Stay in touch, hope to hear from you soon, and God bless.



Charles, grandson Vincent, and Jaz.

Appendix A

Selecting and Caring for a Young Horse

After you have made the decision to buy and raise a baby, you need to know where to find a reputable breeder. The following section offers suggestions on where you can begin your investigation. I have included ideas on where you can research breeders and also a listing of Web sites that will be helpful in your search.

Once you find a horse you want to purchase, I recommend you ask your veterinarian to perform a pre-purchase exam. The section “Pre-Purchase Exam Tips for the Young Horse” explains all about the exam and why it is important. The next two sections, “Preventive Health Care for the Young Horse” and “Nutrition for the Young Horse,” tell you how to raise a healthy horse. You’ll find information on common medical disorders that can be prevented through diet and vaccination, and on feeding the young horse.

FINDING A REPUTABLE BREEDER

by Charles Wilhelm

Throughout the course of this book I have firmly advocated the idea of buying a very well bred young horse, meaning the horse exhibits well in all three of the main aspects: physically, mentally, and especially emotionally. I have shared what I think are the benefits of working with young horses who have been bred by experienced and knowledgeable breeding operations. The next question, then, is for those who wish to do the same thing, How do you find a reputable breeder of high-quality horses?

As I discussed early on, the place to begin is with a thorough evaluation of the specific goals surrounding your desire to purchase a young horse, or any horse,

for that matter. What are your intentions? Assuming you have given this a lot of thought and know what you want, it comes down to research and references.

There are many different ways to research breeders. The Internet, of course, has a wealth of information and really expedites the process of gathering data. But the Internet also provides a type of “reality barrier,” since it readily provides misleading information along with hard facts, and sometimes it’s hard to tell which is which.

A good start is to contact breed organizations; local, regional, or national. Of course, “politics” sometimes come into play regarding which breeders are reputed to have better horses. But at the end of the day, the vast majority of these organizations are known for high levels of integrity; and are dedicated to perpetuating and improving the breed(s) they represent. While they will typically not recommend specific breeders, they are usually happy to point you in the direction of where you can find solid information for breeders in your own area, or those offering horses that meet your search criteria.

If you have your heart set on a specific breed, I recommend that you become a member of that breed’s national or local organization. Membership costs are usually modest and joining almost always gives you access to other members who can share references. As a bonus, members are usually granted access to online reporting tools for a discounted fee. And even if you do not have a specific breed in mind, there are wonderful horsemanship or discipline associations in nearly every area that can also give you an insider’s view on breeders who may have the type of horse you are seeking.

I want to emphasize again that within every breed (and cross) of horse, there are wonderful horses, mediocre horses, and poorly bred horses. This book is not intended to try to convince you to buy a foundation Quarter horse. The message is that you should be taking the time and energy to get yourself the best possible young horse for whatever breeding you want. I selected a National Foundation Quarter Horse because that was my preference at this time, for the goals I have for this horse. But my other lifetime horse is an Arab, and the truth is that I really like many horse breeds. I need a T-shirt that says, “So Many Horses, So Little Time.”

The point is that the breed does not determine a great horse; it is the skilled match of a great sire and a great dam that results in great offspring, and that can happen in any breed and cross. The magic is in the knowledge and skill of the breeder; and their access to appropriately cross the best-quality mares and stallions. I don’t have a great horse just because she is a foundation Quarter horse; Jaz is a great horse because she was bred to be a great horse.

So as you start looking into the type of horse you want, your goal should be a horse who has been crossed in such a way that the horse is as good as or better than its sire and dam, especially in disposition.

So, the Internet is your first line of defense for research. Once you have narrowed down your search, you can start cross-referencing by other characteristics that are important to your goal. For example, if you want to be showing later, seek out breeders whose horses are throwing babies who grow up to have exceptional show records. If you want a super-quiet family horse, find breeders whose customers have bred horses with those same traits you seek.

And speaking of customers, I cannot say enough about word of mouth. It can be very powerful, but you have to remember that can be both good and bad. Sometimes one angry customer is louder than ten very satisfied customers. But in any case, you have to talk to people to get the full story. Ask breeders for customer references and then actually contact the people—and not just one customer, either. Get as much information as you can on people's experience with the horses they purchased and with the breeder. When possible, try to see in person (or at least in photos or video) horses with the same breeding as what you are seeking.

Another way to find a good breeder is to attend regional or national competitions for the particular discipline you want to pursue. Watch the events carefully for horses who seem to have the physical, mental, and emotional characteristics you want, and then find out what their pedigree is to see if you can track down a baby of like breeding.

If you have an existing relationship with a trainer you trust implicitly, they are likely to have contacts in the breeding community and can help you select a horse. It's hard for me to just tell people to let their trainer select a horse for them because at the end of the day, it is *your* horse. I really think each owner should be very involved in the decision. Ultimately it depends on your own skill, as well as comfort with your trainer's advice. All I will say for certain is that if anyone ever recommends you buy a horse about whom you have serious misgivings, you should certainly spend some time exploring those feelings. A horse is an enormous investment of time, money, and energy. You should always feel very comfortable with the decision to buy one. I don't believe anyone should ever feel pressured into buying a horse who does not feel right.

Another consideration is local versus long-distance buying. If you open your search out of state, or even cross-country or internationally, you obviously greatly increase your options. The downside of long-distance buying is one of both time and money. I do not think that novice horse people should buy a horse unseen, unless they are working with a very trusted trainer or have a trial agreement or some kind of arrangement that enables them to return the horse. So to me that means that considering a long-distance horse should involve one or more trips to evaluate the horse(s). I would advocate this only in the event you were referred by extremely knowledgeable resources to a larger breeding operation that has a high probability of having stock that meets your goals, and will give you the chance to select from multiple good-quality candidates. Then

the time and money to buy far from home may well be a great investment. For example, I would certainly recommend someone travel to Jaz Ranch if they were looking for an all-around performance horse prospect.

As horse owners, we too often experience heartbreak when we have a horse who runs into a physical problem or a real training issue. Yes, these can happen with any horse, but the more you work to find a really well-bred horse, the less likely it is to happen. I will say it again: To invest in a quality horse up front will save you money later, and you are much more likely to enjoy your partnership.

We could not begin to list all the major registries, associations, and equestrian clubs that have wonderful Web sites. Following is a brief list of some of the more popular ones. Any omissions are inadvertent; no important national groups were intentionally left out. Hopefully these may aid in your initial research to narrow down what type of horse you might want, and then to help find an appropriate breeder. We wish you the very best in finding the prospective horse of your dreams!

National Organization Web Sites for Breed/Color Registries

www.akhalteke.org

www.amha.org (Miniature horses)

www.andalusian.org

www.americanbuckskin.com

www.americansaddlebredsporthorse.com

www.americantrakehner.com

www.americanwarmblood.org

www.apha.com (Paint horses)

www.appaloosa.com

www.aqha.com (Quarter horses)

www.arabianhorses.org

www.clydesusa.com (Clydesdale horses)

www.curlyhorses.org

www.fhana.com (Friesen horses)

www.gypsyvannerhorse.com

www.hackneysociety.com

www.haflingerhorse.com

www.hanoverian.org

www.holsteiner.com

www.icelandics.org

www.irishdraught.com

www.isroldenburg.org (National Show horses)

www.jockeyclub.com (Thoroughbreds)

www.lovelongears.com (Donkey and Mules)

www.morab.com

www.morganhorse.com

www.mfthba.com (Missouri Fox Trotter)

www.nasdha.net (Spotted Draft horses)

www.naturalgait.com (Kentucky and Rocky Mountain horses)

www.nawpn.org (Dutch Warmblood horses)

www.nfhr.com (Fjord horses)

www.nfqha.com (National Foundation Quarter horses)

www.nrhaweb.com (Racking horses)

www.palominohorseassoc.com

www.pasofino.org

www.percheronhorse.org

www.phr.com (Performance horses)

www.poac.org (Pony of the Americas)

www.pphrna.org (Peruvian horses)

www.shetlandminiature.com

www.shirehorse.org

www.shoc.org (Sport Horses of Color)

www.spottedhorseregistry.com

www.twhbea.com (Tennessee Walking horses)

www.ustrotting.com (Standardbred horses)

National Organization Web Sites by Discipline

www.americandrivingsociety.org

www.americanvaulting.org

www.endurance.net

www.nbha.com (Barrel Racing)

www.nhacutting.com (Cutting)

www.nrha.com (Reining)

www.nsba.com (National Snaffle Bit Association)

www.ponyclub.org

www.sidesaddle.org

www.usdf.org (Dressage)

www.usef.org (Governing Body for Equestrian Sports)

www.useventing.com

www.ushja.org (Hunter/Jumper)

Other Educational Web Sites

www.ansi.okstate.edu/breeds/horses

www.equinecolor.com

PRE-PURCHASE EXAM TIPS FOR THE YOUNG HORSE**by Carrie Schlacter, V.M.D.**

Why purchase a young horse? Buying the right horse to fulfill your dreams can be a daunting task. Some choose to buy at a very young age and create the horse of their dreams. From a veterinary perspective this can have some distinct advantages. A horse under the age of 2 will often have very little wear and tear on them. They are less likely to have chronic conditions or trauma in their past. They may not even be shod or started in the saddle and bridle yet. Each of these stages has the potential to affect the horse's health. So why even bother pre-purchasing a young horse?

Reason number one to do a pre-purchase exam (PPE) on a young horse is the potential to spot genetic or congenital disorders. Because the horse is young these disorders may not have had time to show themselves yet. Your veterinarian should be aware of the potential for these problems in the particular breed you have chosen. A thorough exam and some pertinent questions will often rule out a large number of disorders.

A certain percentage of some breeds are affected with genetic disorders. For example, hyperkalemic periodic paralysis (HYPP) is a well-known genetic disorder prevalent in the Quarter horse industry. HYPP causes seizures associated with the animals' exercise and diet. It often goes unnoticed in animals before they are exercised regularly. This disorder is more likely to occur in certain bloodlines and can be diagnosed via a simple genetic test.

Reason number two is that young horses are more likely to develop infectious disorders than their older brethren. Again your veterinarian should be able to rule out infectious disease and discuss with you the best way to help avoid such a problem. This can involve diet, stable management, vaccination, worming, and so on. All of these issues are slightly different for the young horse than the middle-aged to older animal.

For example young horses are more prone to respiratory diseases. They can pick these up in a trailering situation and whenever they are exposed to new animals. The exam as well as some blood work can help rule out the presence of such a disease.

Reason number three is that a pre-purchase exam is often a good way to learn more about the young horse's personality and level of training as it often involves new situations and extended contact.

Young horses often have had only one handler in their short life and while they may behave beautifully for that one person they may be so frightened of strangers that a thorough physical exam isn't even possible.

When to Do a Pre-Purchase Exam

Some people choose to have the pre-purchase exam done as soon as they meet the horse to avoid getting attached and then finding out something is wrong later. Others choose to decide based on suitability first, and use the pre-purchase as a final piece in the decision-making process. Try to be present for the pre-purchase, because it is a good learning experience and a great time to ask questions.

Where to Do the Pre-Purchase Exam

It often helps to have the pre-purchase exam for young horses done at their home farm where they are most comfortable. If further diagnostics are decided upon, the horse may need to be brought to a veterinary clinic. If it is necessary to perform the pre-purchase at a strange location, it may help to have the horse arrive early and acclimate somewhat to the new location. Behavior is often a factor in the quality of an exam done on a young animal.

The facilities themselves can also be a factor in the exam. An ideal setting consists of a dark, quiet place to do the initial exam of eyes, ears, lungs, and so on; a flat firm surface of some length to do the jogging and flexions tests on; and a fenced round pen or arena to view the animal moving through all her paces. It is safest if the facilities are fully fenced in case the young animal does get away.

What's Involved in the Pre-Purchase Exam

Simply put, a pre-purchase exam should be a home inspection, a list of all the faults found with the animal and a discussion of the potential repercussions of these faults performed by an independent party. Each veterinarian does a full pre-purchase exam in his or her own way; however, they should all include a general health exam of the cardiovascular, respiratory, gastrointestinal, ophthalmologic, auditory, and neurological systems. Many will incorporate a detailed exam of the musculoskeletal system complete with conformational faults, flexion tests, and possibly further diagnostics such as radiographs, ultrasounds, and endoscopies. Pre-purchases may also include blood work and genetic testing. If you are buying this horse with the idea of selling her in the future, a more thorough PPE now may save you heartache later.

Sometimes the pre-purchase exam of a young horse is forced to be brief because the animal has not been handled enough to make a full exam feasible. If you decide a pre-purchase exam is important in your decision to buy a horse, then be sure the animal is truly halter broken and can be easily touched by strangers.

An examination at rest of the young horse's eyes, ears, teeth, and overall body condition is the starting point for many PPEs. This can find visual problems, confirm age, and estimate overall health.

Step two is an auscultation exam of the animal's heart, lungs, and gastrointestinal tract. Here your veterinarian will listen for abnormalities in the heart rate and rhythm. Though uncommon, these abnormalities are often undetected clinically until the animal is asked to exercise strenuously. The veterinarian can listen for ingested sand along the ventral abdomen; this is particularly important in coastal areas. Young horses are often not stalled and can ingest large amounts of sand off the ground. This is a common cause of diarrhea and a source of colic.

Respiratory problems occur more commonly in young animals than in older animals. Young horses who have traveled long distances or are unvaccinated are at higher risk for respiratory disease. Most often horses are tied when they are trailered, and this prevents them from being able to drop their head and cough. This predisposes them to respiratory disease. The safest approach is to leave them at liberty in the trailer or else tie the head low enough to allow them to drop it to chest level and cough. A number of studies have shown that an open trailer is less likely to produce disease than a closed trailer. Signs of respiratory disease include a snotty nose, coughing, sneezing, fever, anorexia, and exercise intolerance. Some symptoms of respiratory disease can come and go, so it is important to listen to the horse before and after exercise, as well as to cause them to breathe deeply using a rebreathing technique.

After moving out of the dark, quiet place and onto the firm, flat area, a full assessment of the young horse's conformation should be made. There is a huge variety in the conformation of different breeds of horses. Depending on his or her expertise, your veterinarian may be more or less qualified to speak to the specific conformation of the breed. The importance of conformation is twofold. The first reason we care about conformation is for adherence to breed standard, such as if you are specifically buying a young horse to show in halter conformation classes or to breed. Often the best person to talk to about breed conformity is a halter trainer, who will be up to date on the latest trends in the breed standard.

The second reason to care about conformation is for future suitability and soundness. Both your trainer and your veterinarian can help you with this decision. For example, a smaller-breed horse may not be suitable if you are looking to be competitive on the jumper circuit. A PPE will help pinpoint some conformational faults that are known to predispose a horse to lameness problems. A long pastern bone, for instance, is often associated with suspensory ligament desmitis (tears); this would not be a good quality in a jumper. However, longer

pasterns provide for more lift and more motion and are somewhat desirable in a dressage horse. Perfect hunter conformation would be laughed out of the arena at an Arabian show. Conformation in horses is all about symmetry. One side of the horse should be a mirror image of the other side. Any deviation from this symmetry at a young age may result in conformational faults or lameness. Obvious and severe conformational faults should be considered red flags for future soundness and will often limit the horse's ability to perform. These faults would include severely back at the knee, severely pigeon-toed, clubfoot (depending on age and your willingness to pay for surgery and rehab), severely toed out, or cow hocked.

These more severe conformational faults will often lead to arthritis in the joints of the affected limb. The arthritis arises from the instability in the joints. The instability arises from the lack of symmetry and support that the conformational defects cause. These horses have a shortened useable life span and often suffer through a higher level of pain throughout their lifetime.

One of the more common questions is how big will a young horse get? The first way to judge is the horse's mare and sire. Horses often breed true to genetic form and height within a breed. This can be more difficult to estimate if the horse is crossbred. There are two ways to estimate eventual height on a young horse. The first is to place one end of a lead line or a string on the horse's elbow, then measure down to the horse's fetlock. Keeping that distance, rotate the line on the point of the elbow to some point above the withers. This is an estimation of the eventual height of the horse. Horses are measured in hands, and a "hand" is equivalent to 4 inches. The other way to estimate height is to measure in inches from the coronary up to the middle of the carpus (knee). Then each inch is equal to one hand so 14¾ inches is equal to 14.3 hands.

Once the horse's conformation has been evaluated, the next step is often an all-over palpation of the musculoskeletal system. Some of the points that we look for in a young horse include evidence of major injury, enlarged joints, swollen soft tissue, and poor hoof anatomy or care. These are all things that indicate something that has occurred since the birth of the animal. These abnormalities have a hugely variable level of importance to the young horse's future soundness.

The most obvious nonconformational abnormality is evidence of swollen joints. A joint is defined as the point at which two or more bones join together. This is achieved by a multitude of tendons (muscle to bone attachments), ligaments (bone to bone attachments), cartilage (the smooth covering of the bone), and soft tissue (joint capsule, synovium, and so on). Normal joints should be flexible, pain free, and not obvious to the casual onlooker. An abnormal joint will be less flexible, often painful on flexion, and visually appear as a

balloon of fluid in the area. It will also feel like a fluid-filled balloon when palpated. This often occurs on both sides of the horse (symmetrically) and therefore can be difficult for someone not familiar with horse anatomy to notice. This condition is known as osteochondrosis dessicans (OCD), which is a developmental abnormality that is relatively common in young horses. It occurs while they are growing and laying down layers of cartilage and bone in and around their joints. OCD can cause instability and/or irritation in a joint, causing inflammation and, in time, pain and lameness. The proper way to determine if OCD is present is to radiograph the joint. However, if the joint is already swollen in a young horse, it is likely that OCD is already clinically affecting that animal. OCD is often surgically treatable, and young animals can recover and go on to lead full lives after surgery. Radiographs are required to determine if surgery is an option.

Other abnormalities picked up on palpation would be scars or soft tissue injuries, which may or may not impact the horse's future. Hoof anatomy at this time is usually merely a determination of the eventual size of the horse. Their feet and lower legs are the first to stop growing, so the feet should appear to be big or at least fit the rest of the horse. If they already appear small this means they will likely always appear small. This can potentially lead to lameness problems since each time the hoof hits the ground it has about 1,000 or more pounds of force going through it. A smaller hoof dissipates this force less effectively than a larger hoof. The hoof tester is a pinching instrument that serves to exert additional force onto a horse's foot to elicit specific areas of pain. They can be unreliable in young horses who are not used to having their hooves handled. A lot of hoof abnormalities can be corrected or at least managed with proper hoof trimming or shoeing. Most special shoeing or trimming does come at a higher cost than normal farrier services.

The final step is to see the young horse move and to perform flexion tests. This step also involves listening to the horse's heart and lungs after exercise. Depending on the level of training, this next step can be a bit eye-opening. It ideally involves jogging the horse in a straight line on hard ground numerous times, followed by watching the horse walk and perform higher gaits in a circle.

In watching a horse move we return to the concept of symmetry. Symmetry in conformation does not always translate into symmetry of movement. The ideal gait from which to judge the horse's movement is a two-beated gait such as the trot. This is the easiest for the human eye to judge symmetry in. A horse under the age of 2 should be completely symmetrical in her movement at the two-beated gait, whether a trot or a pace. Any dissymmetry is often an indicator of pain and therefore lameness. An untrained horse may find it difficult to maintain the requested pace for any length of time, so we are often asked to

make a decision based on a small bit of information. After a baseline level of soundness is established the next step is flexion tests.

Flexions are the veterinarian's way of accentuating any subtle pain and making it more obvious to our eye. The grading system runs from negative to severely positive and will vary depending on where your vet was trained. Each leg is held up in the flexed position for a specific period of time, then is released and the animal is moved off in the two-beated gait immediately. Any slight pain will be exaggerated and should show up as lameness. This would be a positive response to flexion. The ideal result in a young animal is four negative results, one for each leg. Positive results can have variable meanings and implications and should be discussed with your veterinarian.

Watching the young horse move through all her gaits gives us the ability to ensure symmetry of movement at the higher gaits as well. In younger horses this is often the most variable portion of the exam because they are not yet trained to cues. Often horses tend to be naturally stronger on one side than the other and look good in one direction yet appear off beat in the other direction. This is not an indication of a problem but is more often a conditioning issue that can be significantly improved with exercise.

Overall a pre-purchase exam should give you a baseline of current problems and a glimpse of potential future problems in the prospective horse. Most veterinarians are trying to move away from the "pass-fail" system and toward the house-inspection style of PPE. Most health issues young horses are more black-and-white since they shouldn't have developed any chronic issues. This also indicates that any health or lameness issues they do have are likely to be more serious and should be red flags in the prospective purchaser's decision process. Your veterinarian is often a neutral source of information about health and lameness issues for your future horse and most of us are glad to share our knowledge.

Dr. Carrie Schlachter has owned and been working around horses for twenty-four years in a variety of disciplines. She received her V.M.D. at the University of Pennsylvania, School of Veterinary Medicine, Philadelphia, where she was the recipient of the George C. Scott award in Equine Sports Medicine. She has been working as an equine veterinarian in northern California for the last four years.

PREVENTIVE HEALTH CARE FOR THE YOUNG HORSE

by Kristin R. Dietrich, D.V.M.

This section is dedicated to the discussion of preventive health care in raising a young horse. Since a comprehensive listing of all medical maladies that can occur in newborns, weanlings, and yearlings is beyond the scope of this book, I will concentrate on the more common medical disorders that can be prevented through diet and vaccination.

It is impossible to address the nutritional needs of a growing foal without some giving consideration to the diet of the mare while she is pregnant. Developmental bone diseases such as osteochondrosis dessicans (OCD) often begin in utero, so a brief overview of broodmare nutrition is beneficial prior to acquiring an understanding of nourishing the growing foal. Up until five to six months of gestation, the mare's diet resembles that of a standard active adult horse. She is not "eating for two" just yet, and overfeeding will only place more fat in the pelvic region, thus reducing the diameter of the birth canal and setting the stage for a difficult delivery; which can have adverse effects on the developing fetus. From the time of pregnancy diagnosis through day 180, I typically advise clients to feed quality forage hay at a rate of 8 to 10 pounds twice daily, with plenty of clean fresh water and free choice salt. Because so many vitamin and mineral supplements are commercially available for horse owners, it is imperative to consult with your veterinarian about the appropriateness of a pregnancy supplement to prevent toxicity, hypervitaminosis, and even birth defects in the fetus. After 180 days gestation, a 10 percent increase in hay (up to 12 pounds fed twice daily), coupled with a complete feed supplement formulated specifically for broodmares and growing foals, will ensure that the mare is receiving enough calories for lactation without providing too much energy that can compromise proper fetal skeleton development. The supplement should contain the balanced trace minerals selenium, zinc, and molybdenum. Copper, provided at a rate of 25ppm (parts per million) with an appropriate calcium/phosphorus ratio are specifically thought to be beneficial in the prevention of many developmental bone diseases such as osteochondrosis dessicans.

Most developmental bone diseases are defined as a complex of bone and joint abnormalities stemming from rapid and early long bone growth in mammals younger than 5 years of age. Long bone development occurs so quickly that the cartilage capping the end of a joint cannot adequately adhere in a uniform fashion, leaving a cyst or a flap of nonadherent cartilage in the joint space. Additionally, the growth plate, or physis, may expand too rapidly and produce physitis/epiphysitis. There is a common theory that OCD has a heredity component, since some breeds of horses, such as Warmbloods, racing Standardbreds,

Thoroughbreds, and American Quarter horses seem to be overrepresented in the disease. However any foal can be subject to this type of disorder if fed a diet rich in carbohydrates and/or protein that encourages radical musculoskeletal growth. When formulating a diet for the pregnant mare, and later for the growing foal, consideration of these diseases becomes very important in light of the fact that at best, the treatment of OCD can entail prolonged periods of complete inactivity for the foal, possibly accompanied by surgery on affected joints—and even then with mixed results. At worst, developmental bone disease can spell out a lifetime of debilitating lameness.

Once the foal has been born, the mare's diet remains the same until several days prior to planned weaning.

It is very important that the foal receive the mare's initial milk containing colostrum within the first twenty-four hours of life because this milk contains the antibodies that will provide the foal's immunity against disease for the first several months of life. The foal should nurse vigorously ten to twenty minutes on the hour but should also have access to fresh water. Imprinting at this time can be beneficial so long as it is not overdone and does not interfere with mare-foal bonding.

Imprinting should focus on touching and handling in a gentle, calm fashion all of those areas that poorly trained horses find objectionable (for instance, the nostrils, mouth, ears, sheath, anus for rectal temperature taking, and the feet). Trust me, your veterinarian and farrier will thank you later. (It may even reflect upon your bill!)

Most find that the foal will start to show interest in Mom's food within the first week. Ingestion of her hay and "creep feeding" with her complete feed supplement is completely normal. Again, supplementing the foal with copper, appropriate low protein levels (approximately 14 percent), and the correct calcium/phosphorus ratio can help prevent developmental bone disease.

Typically, seven to ten days after birth, the foal will experience diarrhea or "scours" corresponding with the mare's first "foal heat." The diarrhea is best managed in the baby by supplying an oral probiotic containing lactobacillus acidophilus and bifidus daily as needed to control symptoms. To protect delicate skin, a viscous, adherent ointment such as Desitin or Vaseline should be applied to all areas around the anus wetted by the diarrhea. Diarrhea left unchecked can lead to electrolyte loss and dehydration.

During the first three months, the foal grows and continues to develop (hopefully uneventfully). Unless something unexpected occurs, there should be no need to see a veterinarian for the first ninety days. However at three to four months, the immunity that was passed on to the foal by nursing the colostrum starts to wain, and we need begin a vaccination program and contemplate weaning the foal. There are many thoughts on when is the correct

time to wean a foal. It is fairly common practice to wean at six months, but in my own personal experience, I have needed to wean a colt as early as twelve weeks because he was attempting to mount his own dam repeatedly. Excessive weight loss in the mare from the intense drain of lactation can also create the need for early weaning. Whenever you determine the best time for weaning, try to separate the stress of vaccination from the stress of weaning.

My recommendation for vaccinations is an initial series of tetanus, eastern and western equine encephalomyelitis (sleeping sickness), rhinopneumonitis, influenza, and West Nile virus administered at three months, then boosted again at four months. De-worming should be performed at this time as well. My personal preference is either a pyrantel pamoate or fenbendazole paste, but ivermectin is also perfectly safe. *Do not de-worm foals with moxidectin.* De-worm again at the time of the booster vaccines, then the foal can be placed on the mare's de-worming schedule.

Weaning should occur at least one week after either series of vaccines, but if you have the luxury of waiting, two to four weeks after the booster series is administered would be optimal. I believe weaning should always be a planned event. Two days prior to weaning, the mare's hay ration should be dropped by 10 percent and her complete feed broodmare supplement eliminated. This simple act will reduce milk production and lower the chance of mastitis of the mammary gland. The foal should continue to creep feed the complete feed broodmare supplement in an appropriate feeder that keeps Mom out until the two are separated. If at all possible, weaning is most successful and least stressful if the dam can enter a "herd" of two or more broodmares (or gentle geldings, if you are not at a breeding facility) and the foal coupled with at least one other youngster, preferably a yearling or younger. If your mare and foal are in your backyard and you cannot make proper accommodations, at a bare minimum they need to be out of each other's line of sight. Merely seeing her foal stimulates oxytocin release and milk letdown and increases the stress of the entire experience. After successfully weaning the foal, the two may be reintroduced, somewhere between many weeks to what may become months. (I have seen yearlings attempt to nurse their dam in an adjacent paddock through the pipe corral after six months of separation.)

From weanling to yearling age, I prefer to let foals be foals. Basic halter and lead training is fine, but it is best to not push these young animals, psychologically or physically. Their diet should be comprised of quality forage hay or non-lush pasture, supplemented with a small amount of 14 percent protein complete feed fed at a rate that does not encourage rapid, early growth. It is best to consult your veterinarian regarding your specific situation, since pasture conditions across the country vary, as does the availability of certain brands of feed. Providing balanced minerals and salt is essential for regulated growth until the

age of 2. I advise my clients to monitor their foal's joints carefully, particularly the carpus or "knee" of the front limbs, and fetlocks of all four limbs, looking for flaring at the growth plates, or any hourglass shape that can be early signs of physisitis or epiphysitis.

At 6 months of age to 1 year, you may also elect to vaccinate against other diseases that are problematic in your area of the country, such as rabies, Potomac horse fever, strangles, botulism, and so on. Most of these vaccines will require a booster before immunity is conferred, so you will want to bring all vaccinations current before the age of 2.

It is beneficial to start checking the yearling's teeth at this time for sharp erupting caps (baby or milk teeth) and later on, wolf teeth. Again, consult your veterinarian, since he or she is your first line of defense against disease, your ally in prevention, and an invaluable resource for information.

Finally, a last word about training. There are as many opinions regarding when to begin training a young horse as there are trainers and veterinarians. My personal opinion is simple. You will extend your horse's serviceability and promote joint health by starting her later. I have based my opinion upon the examination, pre-purchase, and treatment of performance and sport horses in Florida and California, as well as Austria, Spain, and Germany. The European consensus is to start horses later, usually between the ages of 5 and 7. Some American industries advocate training that includes load-bearing activities at high speeds as early as 18 months. After experiencing the disappointment of seeing degenerative joint disease on the hock radiographs of a lame 7-year-old eventer in northern California, there is no question in my mind about which practice is more advantageous for the horse. Just one week prior, I had the honor of performing a pre-purchase exam at the Spanish Riding School of Vienna. Imagine my delight when I was able to report back to my client that the 13-year-old Lippizaner stallion she was poised to buy had pristine hock radiographs! He was started at the age of 7. Starting a horse that late may not always be practical, but if I can get just one person to start a horse just one year later than they would have, then I have been part of the solution.

I wish a lifetime of health and soundness for your equine companion.

In 1996, Kristin R. Dietrich, D.V.M., founded the successful Bay Area equine clinical practice, Sound Solutions. Managing a large client base, her practice covers a broad geography, including the East Bay, South Bay, Coast, and Peninsula. In addition to providing routine procedures, pre-purchase examinations, and emergency care, Dr. Dietrich specializes in lameness evaluations and reproductive services. On multiple occasions, Dr. Dietrich's expertise was sought by the Center for Andalucian Equestrian Arts, Este Pona, Spain (February 2003), and the Spanish Riding School, (Wein) Vienna, Austria (January 2000), to pre-purchase evaluate candidate equines.

From 1993 to 1996, Dr. Dietrich was on staff at Bayhill Equine Veterinary Service in Redwood City, California. Prior to Bayhill, she was a staff veterinarian at Collins Equine Veterinary Services in Alta Loma, California. At the University of Florida, she worked for Edward Stephens, Ph.D., as a researcher studying the use of feline immunodeficiency virus as a model for the human immunodeficiency virus, then extrapolating that model to examine medications and compounds that inhibit the formation of surface protein spikes. She is proficient in western blot, ELISA, and polymerase chain reaction (PCR) techniques. Based on her research in the immunodeficiency virus, Dr. Dietrich was published on multiple occasions while attending medical school. Dr. Dietrich completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Florida in 1987. Subsequently she attended the University of Florida's College of Veterinary Medicine, where she completed her Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine in 1991.

NUTRITION FOR THE YOUNG HORSE

by Stephen Duren, Ph.D.

Few topics in equine nutrition stir more controversy than feeding the young horse. Many factors add to the confusion of providing nutrition at this critical stage of growth. For example, many young horses will have different commercial endpoints. Some will be shown in halter futurities, where maximum growth and condition are required at a young age. Others will be prepared for sale, again requiring a "well-grown" individual. Still other young horses will be kept on the farm to be used as replacement horses or future performance horses. These horses often have less pressure on them to look their best at a young age.

Another point of confusion rests with the breed of horse being fed. The phrase "you can't feed an Arabian like a Thoroughbred" highlights the impact of differing genetics on growth rate and ultimately on the amount of feed the weanling is fed. The influence of genetics on nutrition is well understood in other farm animals, where it is common to have a different feeding program depending on the breed (genetics) of the animal. In horses, the genetic diversity within a breed is often as big a factor as the genetics between breeds in feeding young horses. In the American Quarter horse breed, weanlings bred for halter classes have a far greater capacity for muscle growth and development than weanlings bred for performance classes. Simply looking at the physical differences between halter horses and reining horses should point out the genetic differences and thus the need for different feeding programs. Finally, "good old difference of opinion" is a factor in feeding young horses. Some people like to feed grain to babies; others feel that feeding grain to young horses is the root of all evil.

Although feeding young horses is confusing, the fact remains that nutrition mistakes (overfeeding or underfeeding) made early in life can lead to structural problems that limit future success potential.

You can omit a lot of the things you do to and for your horse. You can forego the spray that helps make your horse's coat shine. You can occasionally forget to clean out her feet. You can be a couple of weeks late on de-worming, or wait another week before calling your farrier to trim her feet. However, you cannot neglect feeding your horse. For her body to work properly, your horse needs to eat properly.

Most people who own young horses have a strong desire to properly feed their animals. Many horse owners, however, get lost in the vast array of nutrition choices and end up with poor feeding programs. Feeding a young horse, as well as any other type of horse, does not need to be difficult. The key to proper feeding is to understand the basics and to keep your nutritional goals in mind.

What's in Feed?

From oats to apples, all feed contain nutrients. The only difference among feed-stuffs is the amount of nutrients each offers. Because all feed provide nutrients, it is no longer appropriate to label feed as "good" or "bad." Feed should be discussed by their nutrient content. This allows horse owners to make reasonable choices about what they are going to feed their horse and why. The nutrients contained in feed are energy, protein, vitamins, minerals, and water.

Energy

Energy runs the chemical reactions in the body, supplies the fuel that stimulates the heart to beat and muscles to contract, fosters fetal development in mares, and supports the milk production that initiates and promotes growth young horses. For most horses, 80 to 90 percent of the feed consumed is used to satisfy energy requirements. Thus, the main focus of any diet is energy. The energy content of a feed is measured in units called calories. Energy is not an actual nutrient per se. Instead, energy results from the digestion of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats.

In plant-eating animals such as horses, carbohydrates are the primary source of energy. Approximately 75 percent of all plant material is made up of carbohydrates. Different types of carbohydrates are found in horse feed, and the horse is able to digest and use these assorted carbohydrates to varying degrees. Carbohydrates can be divided into two broad categories, structural and non-structural. Structural carbohydrates are known as plant fiber and act as the skeleton of the plant. These are tough, rigid compounds, so tough, in fact, that no mammalian digestive system produces chemicals or enzymes that can break them down. However, horses are able to make use of plant fiber because of bacteria that

live in their digestive tracts. About 50 percent of the plant fiber taken in by horses is digestible, and the rest is simply passed out in the manure. Conversely, nonstructural carbohydrates are composed of sugars, the most common being starch. Grain is rich in starch. On average, 90 percent of nonstructural carbohydrates are digestible by horses.

Fat is another source of energy for horses. On a pound-for-pound basis, fat provides approximately three times as much energy as oats and two and one-half times as much energy as corn. Natural feedstuffs given to horses, such as hay and simple grains, contain small amounts of fat. The most common sources of fat given to horses are vegetable oils (corn oil and soybean oil, for example) and high-fat stabilized rice bran.

Finally, protein fed in excess of requirements can be used for energy. The digestion of protein for energy production is inefficient and produces nitrogen as a by-product. Nitrogen must be excreted in the urine. Therefore, protein is thought of as “metabolically expensive.” Not only does it tax metabolism, but protein is the most expensive ingredient in a ration, so the use of it as an energy source is unwise.

Protein

Protein is a major component of hair, hoof, skin, muscle, blood cells, enzymes, and hormones. Once water and fat are removed, 80 percent of the body is composed of protein. Protein is used to build new tissues and repair damaged ones. Proteins are composed of amino acids. Individual amino acids are chemically bound in various arrangements to assimilate the many proteins of the body. Think of the individual amino acids as letters in the alphabet and the complete proteins as the words created by those letters. Most horse owners are concerned about the proper amount of protein in the feed. The protein content of feed is listed on the feed tag. The amount of protein required in the diet depends on the requirement of an individual horse, the quality of protein being fed, and the amount of feed the horse is eating. Given that many horse owners are concerned about protein levels, the following levels of protein in the total diet provide an appropriate starting point:

Mature (Maintenance)	8–10%
Mature (Training)	10–12%
Pregnant Mares	11–12%
Lactating Mares	13–14%
Weanlings	14½–16%
Yearlings	13–14%

Vitamins

Vitamins are essential for all metabolic functions within a horse. Horsemen are often concerned about vitamin levels in feeds. Much of this concern is unwarranted, however, because horses can create within their body sufficient quantities of all vitamins except vitamins A and E.

Vitamins are divided into two classes, fat-soluble and water-soluble. Fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, and K) are stored in the fat reserves of the body. As such, caution is advised because oversupplementation with vitamins is possible, and toxicity or poisoning may occur, especially with vitamins A and D. Water-soluble vitamins, including the B vitamins and vitamin C, are not stored in the body. Due to their solubility, oversupplementation of these vitamins is not considered a health risk.

Minerals

Minerals are inorganic substances that are needed by the horse for normal metabolic and biological activity. Unlike vitamins, minerals cannot be created by the horse; thus, they need to be supplied in the diet. Fortunately, most common feeds contain a variety of important minerals. The mineral content of feedstuffs varies depending on the soil in which the feed is grown. Therefore, it is customary to add minerals to commercial horse feeds. Although horses need minerals, these should only be supplemented to correct for specific mineral deficiencies in a diet. Too much mineral supplementation is as detrimental as too little.

Minerals are often divided into two categories. Macrominerals are necessary in large amounts in the diet. Examples of macrominerals include calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, sodium, and chloride. Microminerals are required in micro or small amounts in the diet. Examples of microminerals include copper, zinc, selenium, and iodine.

Water

Water is the single most important nutrient in the diet. A horse can lose almost all of its body fat and over 50 percent of its body protein and still survive. However, a loss of only 10 percent of its water reservoir can be devastating to the health of a horse. Water functions as a coolant, as a universal solvent for many of the chemical reactions in the body, and as a carrier of nutrients to and waste products away from the cells in the body. The water requirement of the horse varies based on environmental temperature, exercise or activity, lactation, and the type and amount of feed consumed. As a practical guideline, horses should have unlimited access to fresh clean water.

In sum, horses must be supplied with sufficient quantities of energy, protein, vitamins, minerals, and water. Learning how a horse utilizes the nutrients in feed is the next step in understanding basic horse nutrition.

Utilizing Feed: The Digestive System

The digestive tract of the horse is divided into two distinct areas based on the type of digestion that occurs. The front portion of the digestive system, sometimes called the foregut, features enzymatic digestion, and the hindgut is designed for bacterial fermentation. The horse begins the digestive process by taking feed into the mouth and chewing. For this process to be efficient, the horse needs a sound, functional mouth. Chewing and the presence of food in the mouth stimulate the flow of saliva, which lubricates the food and enables ease of swallowing. Food passes from the mouth, travels down the esophagus, and lands in the stomach. The stomach of an adult horse is very small compared to body size, thus limiting meal size. In the stomach, the digestive process continues as acid mixes with the feed. From the stomach, food passes into the small intestine, the main site of enzymatic digestion and absorption. Feed not digested in the stomach and small intestine moves into the hindgut for fermentation by microorganisms. The hindgut consists of the cecum and the colon. Billions of bacteria and protozoa work together in the hindgut to break down plant fiber. The intestinal microorganisms produce energy-yielding compounds called volatile fatty acids, as well as amino acids and B vitamins. In addition, the hindgut is responsible for the absorption of water and electrolytes from the diet. Undigested material advances into the rectum and is passed as manure. The entire digestive process takes twenty-four to seventy-two hours.

Lessons Learned from the Digestive System

The anatomy of the digestive system provides several clues on how to properly feed horses. Mistakes made in feeding horses can result in serious health issues, including colic and laminitis. First, the digestive system contains a simple stomach. The size of the stomach reveals that horses are best suited to small, frequent meals rather than large meals. Second, digestion should be continuous. In the absence of food, the stomach accumulates acid and causes the formation of ulcers, which may adversely affect growth or performance. Horses perform optimally if they have hay or pasture in front of them at all times.

The grain (starch) portion of the diet is intended to be digested in the small intestine. If too much grain is fed in a single meal or accidental overfeeding occurs, the small intestine is unable to digest all of the starch it is presented. The excess starch spills into the hindgut, where bacterial fermentation occurs. This causes a rapid increase in gut acidity and the potential for laminitis increases greatly. The grain portion of the diet should be limited such that a grain meal is no more than 1.25 pounds of grain per 250 pounds of body weight. Finally, roughly 65 percent of the digestive capacity of the gastrointestinal system is dedicated to the digestion

of plant fiber. This indicates that forage (such as hay or pasture) should be the main ingredient in any diet. Forage helps horses feel full and provides “chewing satisfaction.” A constant source of fiber is essential for the health of bacteria in the hindgut. Plus, a certain amount of bulk in the diet is needed to sustain normal digestive function. Horses deprived of adequate fiber usually let their owners know by seeking out alternative fiber sources, including wood fences, stall fronts, and trees.

Feed Choices

The selection of feedstuffs suitable for horses is tremendous. To understand the different feeding options, it is helpful to classify feeds according to their nutrient profile. When grouped by nutrient content, feed choices are reduced to forage, unfortified grains, fortified grain concentrates, and supplements.

Forage

The most common forages fed to horses include pasture, baled hay, hay cubes, and hay pellets. Pasture is the most natural forage for horses. High-quality pasture can provide horses with every essential nutrient except water. In addition, pasture is relatively inexpensive. To be considered high quality, pasture must have an adequate stand of nutritious plant life, few weeds, and no poisonous plants. Advice on which grasses to plant in a certain geographical region can be obtained by consulting extension personnel at a university, a horse nutritionist, or a veterinarian. A pasture should also be large enough to prevent horses from overgrazing and damaging the plants. Because pasture is not something weighed and measured accurately prior to feeding, as in the case of hay or grain, intake must be controlled by limiting grazing time. If horses are becoming overweight on pasture, the amount of time they are allowed to graze should be reduced.

Hay is made from green plants that are mowed in mid-growth, preserved by drying, and stored to be fed at a later date. Just about any type of plant can be made into hay, although not all hays are equally nutritious for the horse. Top-quality hay begins with nutritious plants. Plants must be harvested at the proper stage of maturity to maximize nutrient content. If plants are allowed to become too mature (tall and coarse), hay made from them resembles baled sticks. Once the plants are cut, they must be allowed to dry so they will not spoil while in storage. The value of high-quality hay cannot be overemphasized. Moldy hay is a potential source of medical problems. Dusty hay is a source of irritation to the respiratory tract and has been implicated as a cause of airway problems. Rodents, rabbits, and any other small animals that get caught up in the hay-baling equipment are a potential source of botulism. A simple rule of thumb works well in regard to feeding hay: If the hay is suspect, do not feed it.

Hays generally can be divided into two types. Legume hays such as alfalfa and clover have microorganisms associated with their root system. These microorganisms are able to use the nitrogen in the air and soil to produce protein. Grass hays such as timothy and orchard grass or cereal grain hays such as oat contain lower protein, less energy, less calcium, fewer vitamins, and more fiber than legume hays. Legume, grass, and cereal grain hays are all perfectly acceptable for horses as long as the nutrient content of the entire diet is properly balanced.

Hay pellets and hay cubes are other forms of forage suitable for horses. Hay is condensed into pellets or cubes by first chopping it into small pieces. Steam is then added to the chopped hay, and it is forced through a pellet or cube die so the pieces of chopped hay bind to one another. Hay pellets and cubes are well accepted by horses once they become familiar with eating little bricks of hay instead of conventional long-stem hay. On the plus side, hay pellets and cubes are easy to store and measure and eaten with virtually no waste. Horses consume the same weight of cubes or pellets as long-stem hay. For instance, a young horse typically offered 10 pounds of hay would be given 10 pounds of pellets or cubes. There is no difference in digestibility between baled hay, cubed hay, or pelleted hay.

Unfortified Grain

Unfortified grain is the seed head of a plant that is harvested from the field and dried to a suitable moisture content for storage. Such grains include oats, corn, barley, wheat, and milo. These grains are considered unfortified because they do not have protein, vitamins, or minerals added to enhance their nutritive value. Unfortified grain can be further subdivided into whole grains and processed grains. Unfortunately, with the single exception of oats, whole grains are not ideal for horses because they have a hard outer hull that protects the starch portion of the grain. Consequently, it is difficult for the horse to digest most whole grains in the small intestine. Grain should be mechanically processed prior to feeding to horses. There are many different ways to process grain, such as cracking, crimping, flaking, grinding, and rolling. These processing methods break the grain kernel and increase the surface area for digestion.

Fortified Concentrates

Fortified concentrates are most often fed to horses. These products often include several processed grains and a protein, vitamin, and mineral supplement package. The supplementation is added by the feed manufacturer and typically includes both fat- and water-soluble vitamins, along with macro- and microminerals. Fortified grain concentrates can be purchased in several different physical forms, depending on processing preference. Examples of the

different physical forms available include textured feeds, pellets, extruded nuggets, and combinations of the three forms. Textured feeds contain a blend of processed (usually cracked or crimped) grain with a light coating of molasses and occasionally vegetable oil. The result is a moist, sticky mix often called sweet feed. Pelleted grain concentrates contain ground grains along with supplemental protein, vitamins, and minerals. The ground materials are mixed together, conditioned with steam, and forced into a pellet-sized die. Extruded products also contain ground grain along with supplemental protein, vitamins, and minerals. The mixture is exposed to extreme heat and pressure, which actually changes the physical nature of the grain, so it can be formed into different shapes.

Supplements

By definition, a supplement is provided “to complete something, to make up for a deficiency, or to extend and strengthen the whole.” Supplements are advertised to cure or help with most horse problems, including rough hair coat, cracked hooves, hyperactivity, sweat loss, anemia, and the list goes on. Supplements are often given in an effort to “improve” the horse. This means that the supplement is given because the owner wants the horse to be somehow better or different than she actually is. The reality with nutrient supplementation is that extra amounts of a nutrient will not supercharge performance if there is not a preexisting deficiency. In other words, giving a blood-building supplement with massive amounts of iron will not make the blood superior if the horse was not deficient in iron originally. On the other hand, many supplements can be helpful if they are part of a balanced feeding program. Before adding any supplement, care should be taken to make sure a horse actually needs the nutrients provided in the supplement. If fed a fortified concentrate at the recommended level, a horse probably does not require a supplement. It should be noted that certain vitamins and minerals, including vitamin A, vitamin D, selenium, and iodine, can be toxic if overfed to horses.

Feeding the Young Horse: The Ground Rules

In many ways, feeding a young horse is much like using a road map. Different roads can lead to the same destination. Likewise, many different feeding choices can result in a balanced diet. When driving, there are certain rules of the road that must be followed, such as stopping at red lights and obeying the speed limit. In regard to feeding horses, following certain rules will increase the likelihood of achieving a balanced diet. Before delving into the ground rules of feeding horses, two basic principles must be understood.

First, to feed horses properly, caretakers must have a realistic idea of how much the horse weighs. This is important because the nutrient requirements, which ultimately determine how much is fed, are based on body weight. Calculating weight can be accomplished by several means. A scale is by far the most accurate means of determining weight. Unfortunately, most people do not own scales to accommodate even a young horse. Scales large enough to weigh a horse may be found at grain elevators or veterinary clinics. The second means of determining weight is to eyeball the horse. Achieving accurate weight assessment using this method is difficult unless the evaluator is experienced. The third method used to determine body weight is a weight tape. Weight tapes can be obtained from a variety of sources, including feed stores and horse catalogs. A fourth way to determine body weight uses body measurements and a simple formula. This is accomplished by measuring the length of the horse from the point of the shoulder to the point of the buttocks and by measuring the distance around the girth at the withers. These numbers are then put into the following equation to determine body weight: $BW \text{ (pounds)} = 9.36 \times \text{girth (inches)} + 5.01 \times \text{body length (inches)} - 348.53$.

Once body weight is determined, feed must be weighed. Vague measurement units such as “flakes” and “coffee cans” are unsuitable when properly evaluating a ration. If the elements of a diet are weighed and accurately measured using any type of scale, the horse will be more likely to receive what she actually needs.

Feeding horses has certain steadfast rules. Following these rules can help prevent many nutritional problems. Fortunately, there are just a few rules to remember:

- The majority of the diet must be composed of forage. At least 50 percent of what is fed to a horse has to consist of either pasture, hay, hay cubes, or hay pellets. The fiber in forage is absolutely necessary to maintain proper gut function.
- Horses should always have unlimited access to clean, fresh water.
- Horses should always be fed high-quality feed. Low-grade feed may lack virtually every nutrient that a feed is supposed to provide. Feed contaminated with mold, dust, and foreign material should be discarded. Because a horse has a one-way digestive tract, the animal is unable to eliminate disagreeable feed by vomiting.
- Monitor energy intake. Energy is the only dietary factor that caretakers can visually assess. A horse who takes in too much energy (eats too much feed) becomes overweight. A horse who consumes too little dietary energy becomes underweight. Whether a horse is too fat or too thin, the blame likely should be assigned to the caretaker.

- If grain is fed, never feed more than 1.25 pounds of grain per 250 pounds of horse in a single feeding. This would calculate to no more than 1.5 pounds of grain per meal for a 300-pound horse. Grain meals should be kept small to avoid undigested starch (grain) reaching the hindgut and undergoing dangerous fermentation.
- Feed regularly from day to day and at least twice a day.
- Dietary changes should be done slowly over a period of two to three weeks. This will help avoid digestive upset or colic.

Creep Feeding: Preparation for Weaning

One of the more complex management decisions that the horse owner has to make is whether to creep feed foals. Creep feed is feed (usually grain) available to the foal that is not available to the mare. Creep feeding has achieved a somewhat negative connotation with many horse owners. The term “supplemental feed” is a more accurate term, indicating that foals have access to a controlled amount of nutrients in addition to mare’s milk. The reasons for supplemental feed for the foal are twofold. First is the issue of providing nutrients to the foal that may not be in adequate supply in the combination of mare’s milk and pasture/hay. Recent research, both in the United States and in Japan, has indicated that foals require supplemental feed to achieve growth rates desired by today’s horse owners. These studies revealed that foals not only required supplemental energy, but they also required supplemental protein and minerals.

Breed differences and the amount of pasture and/or hay consumed will indicate the amount of supplemental energy necessary for a suckling foal to reach industry standards for growth. In some cases, foals may get enough calories from milk and pasture/hay to achieve adequate growth. These foals do not require any additional calories, but would require additional mineral fortification to grow a sound skeleton. This represents a common scenario with warm-blood foals. They get plenty of calories from milk and pasture and typically don’t require supplemental grain to assist in body weight gain. However, feeding these foals a low-intake (1 pound per foal per day), low-calorie source of vitamins and minerals would ensure the foals are properly fortified with nutrients critical for sound growth without making them obese.

A Thoroughbred foal given the same access to pasture and mare’s milk may not be able to achieve industry standards for growth. This foal may require a diet of milk, pasture, and 4 pounds of a 16 percent protein-fortified grain. Both the low-intake low-calorie supplement and the 16 percent grain concentrate

satisfy vitamin/mineral needs; the major difference is that the 16 percent grain provides more calories to the growing foal.

So how does one tell if a foal needs 4 pounds of well-fortified grain concentrate or just 1 pound of a concentrated protein, vitamin, and mineral supplement? The answer lies in evaluating body condition. If foals are well conditioned and are gaining an acceptable amount of weight to achieve the foals' commercial endpoint on milk plus pasture, choose the low-intake supplement. On the other hand, foals who require the extra calories to keep pace with industry standards should be fed the higher-volume higher-calorie grain concentrate. An easy way to track foal weight gains is to utilize an equine weight tape or scale. Both will allow you to check the weight of your foal against normal growth rates for foals of that age and breed. Normal growth curves can be obtained from an equine nutritionist or the National Research Council.

The second reason for feeding foals prior to weaning is to teach them to eat the feeds they will survive on once they are weaned. Introduction of grain and hay will teach the foal to eat these feeds and help prevent post-weaning slumps in growth. Postweaning slumps in growth are often followed by surges in growth once the weanling learns to eat. This slump in growth followed by super-rapid growth is thought to be a prime opportunity for the foals to get Developmental Orthopedic Disease (DOD), which is a term used to describe a number of related diseases affecting the maturation of cartilage into bone in young horses. It will be discussed later.

Example of Diets

Feeding young horses can be roughly divided into three broad categories: futurity weanlings, sale foals, and foals to be retained. The following discussion will highlight the potential differences in the feeding programs for each type of young horse.

Futurity Weanlings

A futurity weanling is usually a weanling between 4 and 10 months of age. These weanlings are of light horse breeding (Quarter horses, Paints, Appaloosas, and the like) shown at halter. Many weanlings are shown in futurity classes since this is the first opportunity to get young horses seen and promote stallions. Evaluation of weanlings is based on conformation, size, and way of going. Therefore, it is an advantage for the weanlings to have maximum growth and condition. To achieve maximum growth and condition, weanlings are often fed large amounts of grain. It does little good to tell a person raising

futurity horses that they are feeding a young horse too much feed. If they do not maximize growth and condition early on, they will not win a prize come futurity time. Balancing maximum growth, maturity, and condition with sound skeletal development is the challenge of feeding futurity weanlings.

Normally, weanlings that are going to be prepared for futurities are kept in the barn from the time they are weaned until the time they are shown. This makes meeting their nutrient requirements easier in some respects since you do not have to account for the variation in pasture nutrient quality. One important consideration with futurity horses is weaning time. Weaning time is affected by the birth month of the foal, the milk production of the mare, and the date of the futurity. Foals born early in the year can remain on the mare longer than foals born in April and May. This extra time a foal can spend with the mare is often an advantage since the foals will continue to grow in a relatively stress-free environment. Foals who are born late run the risk of having to be weaned early. If foals are weaned too close to a futurity, it is likely that the weanling will appear pot-bellied due to a nearly unavoidable postweaning slump.

The diet for a futurity weanling must be extremely palatable since they are being asked to eat a large volume of feed. The forage source should be a good mixed hay (alfalfa and grass) or a fine-stemmed alfalfa hay. Nutritionally the mixed hay is preferred because of the better balance (ratio) of calcium to phosphorus. Hay should be offered to this age weanling at a rate of approximately 9 to 10 pounds per weanling per day. The grain portion of a weanling diet is the primary vehicle for delivery of essential nutrients. Depending on the nutrient content of the hay, the grain will provide the majority of the energy (calories), protein, minerals, and vitamins. Therefore, a grain concentrate designed for a weanling should be fortified with high-quality protein, additional calories (from fat), and readily available minerals and vitamins. Generally, a grain concentrate appropriate for a weanling will contain at least 14 percent crude protein. If grass hay is being fed, the grain concentrate will contain between 16 and 18 percent crude protein.

Many people are afraid to feed young horses too much protein for fear of causing bone problems. However, mild excesses in protein intake will not cause bone problems. Instead, imbalances in mineral intake or extremely rapid growth triggered by excess energy intake are likely the cause of bone anomalies. The easiest method to determine if the grain contains all the necessary vitamins and minerals is to read the feed tag and be sure the grain concentrate is intended for use in young, growing horses. Grain intakes common for weanlings being prepared for futurities can approach 9 pounds per weanling per day. Finally, an additional source of dietary fat is a must to provide calories for weight gain and essential fatty acids for hair and skin health. Vegetable oil and/or high-fat stabilized rice bran are good sources of fat for these young horses.

Many people incorrectly think a halter horse need only be fat to be successful. In fact, modern futurity weanlings must display muscle tone. Exercise is the method of choice to achieve muscle toning. Many methods of providing forced exercise are available, including hand walking, longeing, ponying, and treadmills. Ponying is becoming increasingly popular with weanlings since the horses are not being asked to constantly turn as is the case with longeing. If the duration and intensity of exercise are too great for the individual weanling, injury and weight loss can occur. On the other hand, weanlings confined to stalls without adequate exercise will possess less bone and muscle mass than exercised weanlings. Any exercise program should be adjusted to the conformation and body condition of the individual horses. A single exercise program will not fit every weanling. Proper feeding and exercise are two-thirds of the puzzle for getting futurity babies to look the part. The other part of the program is health care and grooming. Weanlings must be wormed on a regular basis and have the necessary immunizations and grooming to look their best.

Sale Foals

A young horse destined to be sold is much easier to feed compared with the futurity weanling. Foals who are being sold usually spend a portion of their day or night confined to stalls with the remainder of the time spent outside where they can graze and exercise. The combined affect of more time spent grazing and playing in a pasture and less time in a stall translate into fewer digestive problems and young horses with good muscle tone and bone mass. Since forage is a large portion of their diet, sale foals typically eat fewer pounds of grain in a given day than futurity weanlings. Most sale foals would not exceed 6 to 7 pounds of grain concentrate per day. On the other hand, it is rare for a sale foal to not require at least some grain. Even foals described as “easy keepers” would require some extra nutrients (calories, protein, vitamins, and minerals) provided by the grain concentrate to make themselves presentable for auction. Dietary fat is typically included in the diets for these weanlings as a means of assisting with hair and skin quality.

Foals to Be Retained

Foals who are not going to sales or shows are typically fed in a more conservative manner. These youngsters do not have to grow at a maximum rate or look their best at a young age. Instead, we are trying to raise young horses who will be sound athletes. Generally the best way to assess the impact of the feeding program of these weanlings is through assessment of body condition. Weanlings should maintain a thrifty appearance in which the ribs cannot be seen but can be easily felt. Monitoring weight along with a good condition scoring system allow for the accurate assessment of quality and quantity of growth. The

amount of grain necessary to maintain a thrifty appearance varies with the factors mentioned in the introduction of this article. Being able to feed weanlings as individuals and make necessary feeding adjustments is very important. "Easy-keeping" weanlings should be kept from becoming fat by being fed a low-intake, low-calorie source of essential protein, vitamins, and minerals. On the other hand, weanlings who are big and have a lot of growth potential can consume normal amounts of fortified grain concentrate. A general rule of thumb for feeding weanlings is 1 pound of fortified grain per 100 pounds of body weight, up to a maximum of 6 pounds per weanling per day. It is important to remember that foals from various light horse breeds will not weigh the same at a given age. Further, all young horses do not grow at the same rate or mature at the same time. Horses need to be fed as individuals.

Developmental Orthopedic Disease

One potential pitfall in raising horses is unsoundness resulting from developmental orthopedic disease (DOD). This term is used to describe a number of growth problems resulting from alteration in normal bone formation. Horse owners may not recognize the term DOD but will recognize the many conditions that are included under this broad terminology. Currently, DOD includes: (1) physitis, previously referred to as epiphysitis; (2) osteochondrosis; (3) acquired angular limb deformities; (4) flexural leg deformities; (5) bone malformation; and (6) juvenile arthritis. Each of these conditions can result in lameness, swelling, joint damage, and crooked or misshapen legs. These problems can occur at anytime during the growth cycle of the horse and may even become evident after the horse has matured and enters training.

DOD can be caused by a number of factors including genetics, rapid growth, mechanical stress and trauma, exercise, nutrition imbalances, and endocrine factors. Each of these potential causes has been studied and will receive continued study. Of all the factors known to cause DOD in young horses, nutrition is perhaps the easiest variable to control. Unfortunately, as we have discussed, many horse owners are overwhelmed by the complexity of providing correct amounts of dozens of nutrients known to be important in equine nutrition. This is compounded by horse owner questions regarding how much supplemental feed to provide and when to begin feeding growing horses. To simplify feeding young horses, let's review again which nutrients to provide and when and how to provide these essential nutrients.

When nutritionally balancing diets for young horses, six nutrients should be initially considered to maximize skeletal health: energy, protein (including

the essential amino acid lysine), calcium, phosphorus, copper, and zinc. The functions of these important nutrients are described below. Energy is necessary to run the reactions within the body that synthesize tissue. When energy is fed in excess of the animals' requirements, it is converted to fat and stored within the body. On the other hand, growing horses who do not receive adequate energy will become thin and ultimately slow their rate of growth and development. Protein is a necessary component of every cell in the horse's body. Growing horses utilize large amounts of protein to form muscle and bone. Proteins are composed on building blocks known as amino acids. Lysine is the single most important amino acid for growing horses. Calcium is an important mineral for growing horses, making up approximately 35 percent of the skeleton. Similarly, phosphorus is a critical mineral in that 17 percent of the skeleton consists of this element. Copper and zinc are minerals that are required in lesser amounts, but both are necessary in reactions that form tissues associated with the skeleton.

Knowing when and how to provide the correct amounts of energy, protein, lysine, calcium, phosphorus, copper, and zinc is the next step in properly feeding the growing horse. Feeding foals actually begins prior to birth within the mare. Proper broodmare nutrition will help ensure the foal gets off to a healthy start. Once the foal is born, she will gradually become interested in feed and may attempt to consume feed with the mare. Foals should be fed their own feed beginning at 60 days of age. The amount of grain or supplement necessary to satisfy the foal's nutrient requirements depends on the concentration of nutrients in the feed and the desired growth rate of the foal. For example, if we consider a foal with an expected mature weight of 1,000 pounds and we want this foal to gain weight rapidly, as in the case of a foal intended for show, fortified grain will often be offered at 1 pound of grain per month of age. For a foal with this expected mature weight, total grain intake usually does not exceed 6 pounds per horse per day. Since all fortified grain does not contain the same amount of critical nutrients, it is absolutely essential to feed fortified grains designed for young horses. Feeding a "senior" or "performance" feed to a growing horse will not deliver adequate nutrition. If a slower growth rate is desired, or if the young horse is getting adequate calories from good-quality forage, less fortified grain is typically fed. However, the growing horse still requires adequate amounts of essential nutrients, and if a smaller amount of fortified grain is fed, the young horse may not meet her nutrient requirements. To solve this problem, less volume of a more concentrated feed can be provided to the growing horse. In this case, a protein, vitamin, and mineral supplement pellet should be fed instead of a fortified grain.

Optimal Condition Through Nutrition

To determine a proper diet for any horse, a logical starting point must be established. After calculating how much a horse weighs and how much to feed it, an idea of how much it should weigh should be considered. In other words, is the horse in optimum condition? Is it obese or ribby? The following is a “condition score” chart adapted from D. R. Henneke, first published in *Equine Veterinary Journal* in 1983.

- | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|
| 1 | Poor | Extremely emaciated; spinous processes, ribs, tailhead, tuber coxae, and ischia project prominently; bone structure of withers, shoulders, and neck easily noticeable; no fatty tissue can be felt. |
| 2 | Very thin | Emaciated; slight fat covering over base of spinous processes; transverse spinous processes cannot be felt; vertebrae feel rounded; spinous processes, ribs, tailhead, tuber coxae, and ischia prominent; withers, shoulders, and neck structures are faintly discernible. |
| 3 | Thin | Fat buildup about halfway on spinous process; transverse spinous process cannot be felt; slight fat cover over ribs, spinous processes easily felt; tailhead prominent but individual vertebrae cannot be identified visually; tuber coxae rounded but easily seen; tuber ischia not apparent; withers, neck, and shoulder accentuated. |
| 4 | Moderately thin | Slight ridge along back; faint outline of the ribs discernible; tailhead prominence depends on conformation, fat can be felt around it; tuber coxae not discernible; withers, shoulders, and neck not obviously thin. |
| 5 | Moderate | Back is flat (no crease or ridge); ribs not visually distinguishable but easily felt; fat around tailhead beginning to feel spongy; withers appear rounded over spinous processes; shoulders and neck blend smoothly into body. |
| 6 | Moderately fleshy | May have slight crease down back; fat over ribs is spongy; fat around tailhead soft; fat beginning to be deposited along the side of withers, behind shoulders, and along neck. |

- | | | |
|---|---------------|---|
| 7 | Fleshy | May have crease down back; individual ribs can be felt but noticeable filling between ribs with fat; fat around tailhead soft; fat deposited along withers, behind shoulders, and along neck. |
| 8 | Fat | Crease down back; difficult to feel ribs; fat around tailhead very soft; area along withers filled with fat; areas behind shoulders filled with fat; noticeable thickening of neck; fat deposited along inner thighs. |
| 9 | Extremely fat | Obvious crease down back, patchy fat over ribs; bulging fat around tailhead, along withers, behind shoulders, and along neck; fat along inner thighs may rub together; flank filled with fat. |

Feeding the Overweight Horse

Remember, if a horse is fat, it is the fault of her caretaker. After all, horses love to eat, and they can only eat what is offered to them. If a horse is overweight, a combination of feed restriction and exercise will facilitate weight loss. Care should be taken not to reduce forage intake below 1 percent of body weight. If forage is restricted beyond this level, the digestive system will not function properly. Switching the overweight horse to a lower-energy hay (from alfalfa hay to grass hay, for example) will reduce calorie intake. Exercise should begin gradually and increase in intensity. Weight loss will take time.

Feeding the Underweight Horse

A thin horse presents unique challenges. Any number of factors can result in a horse becoming underweight, but as a practical matter, the most common causes of thinness are feed-related. Generally a horse is too thin because her feed is of such poor quality that it cannot possibly satisfy the nutritional requirements of the horse. Another possible reason for an underweight horse is a general lack of feed. Granted, horses may have a parasite infestation, dental problem, or liver ailment that contributes to thinness, but feed quality or quantity is usually the culprit.

Another possible factor is “pecking order,” a well-defined layer of dominance within a herd. The horses on the bottom of the pecking order will be chased away from feed by more domineering members of the herd and often will not get adequate opportunity to eat. Regrouping horses often solves this problem. Once the cause of thinness is identified, it may take months for the horse to regain weight. Drastic feed changes to accomplish rapid weight gain should be avoided due to the potential for digestive upset.

In conclusion, the critical importance of good nutrition for the young horse simply cannot be overstated. This is the area where you have the most ability to directly influence the health and wellness of your young horse. The more you can learn about the quality and actual composition of the forage you feed, and then follow these nutritional guidelines (as outlined above), the more you ensure a lifetime of health and soundness for your horse. There are a lot of good products on the market these days to help owners provide the right nutritional balance. If you start by selecting good-quality hay, then supplement that hay with essential protein, vitamins, and minerals either as a fortified grain concentrate or supplement, your horse can have a balanced diet. Remember, it can be as just as destructive to oversupplement as to have deficiencies in the diet. This is why it's so important to be well informed about what you are actually feeding and to make sure it meets standards of what you *should* be feeding.

Dr. Stephen Duren is the founder and owner of Performance Horse Nutrition, LLC. Dr. Duren completed his Bachelor of Science in Animal Sciences at the University of Idaho and earned a Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy in Equine Nutrition and Exercise Physiology from the University of Kentucky. A former consulting equine nutritionist for Kentucky Equine Research in Versailles, Kentucky, Dr. Duren now consults with feed manufacturers and horse owners throughout the world. Dr. Duren is also the coauthor of the book The Concise Guide to Nutrition in the Horse and has a new book going to press soon. More information on Performance Horse Nutrition and Dr. Duren can be found online at www.performancehorsenutrition.com.

Appendix B

References

This appendix provides information about where I purchased Jaz. The first section describes the breeding program at Jaz Ranch, then Gail Zscheile recounts the history of the ranch. The section “About Charles Wilhelm Training Ranch” explains more about Ultimate Foundation Training and the training programs and clinics I offer.

ABOUT JAZ RANCH



Brent Jensen and Gail Zscheile

Joseph, Oregon

541-432-6032

www.jazranch.com or brent@jazranch.com

Jaz Ranch raises National Foundation Quarter Horses with the classic foundation attributes of “Brains, Bone, Beauty, Disposition, and Versatility.” All Jaz Ranch horses are Poco Bueno bred, and their specialty is the grullo, black, and dun color. Jaz Ranch is the proud home of grullo Poco Bueno grandson, Poco’s Gray Comet, currently being crossed on daughters of Little Steel Dust; and two grullo 100 percent foundation sons of Little Steel Dust, Jaz Poco Silverado, AQHA Rom Reining, and Jaz Acero Hombre, being crossed on granddaughters of Poco Bueno. New “Poco” babies are offered for sale each spring.



Jaz Poco Silverald Silverado is a 1997 Silver Grullo Stallion by Little Steel Dust 100% NQHA - AQHA ROM Reining Double Dominant for the Dun dilution gene.

The History of Jaz Ranch

Over twenty years ago, partners Brent Jensen and Gail Zscheile began looking for a riding horse. They wanted a Quarter horse with the rare grullo coloring, and never imagined the initial search would lead to a career in breeding and preserving foundation-bred American Quarter horses. Gail Zscheile relates how she and Brent first became interested in foundation Quarter horses:

“In the mid-eighties Brent and I bought our first grullo Quarter horse from Troy Rose of the Rose Ranch in Colorado. Rose had at that time been raising and selling horses for more than sixty years, and had decided to specialize in the grullo color because, as he said, ‘They are easier to sell.’

“This started our long association with Troy Rose, and when we first saw his grullo grandson of Poco Bueno, Poco’s Gray Comet, we fell in love with the colt immediately. The next five years included frequent visits to the Rose Ranch, in which we bought several horses, and enjoyed wonderful experiences—including watching Troy and his friend Jack, walk out to Poco’s Gray Comet and halter him after he had been out on the range all summer with a band of mares. Not only did this fantastic stallion let Troy catch him with ease after a summer spent

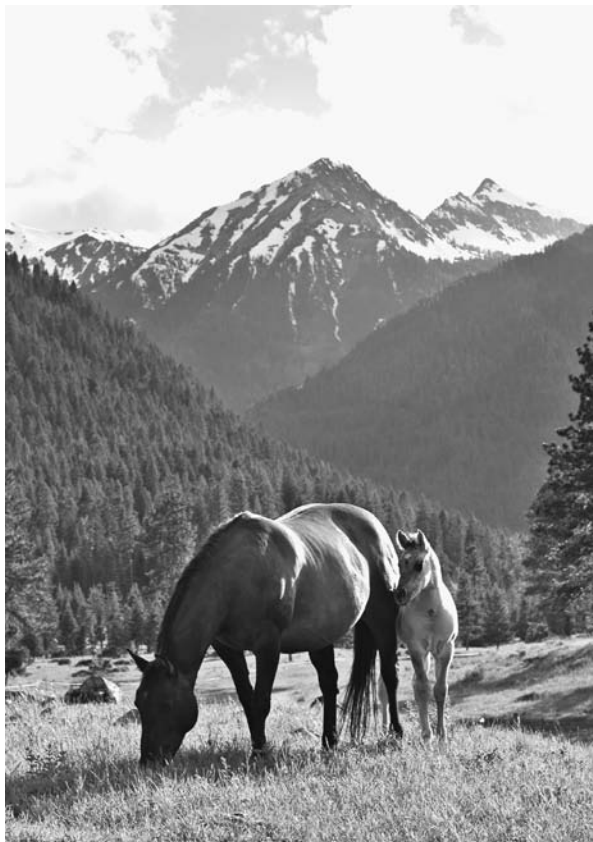


Poco's Gray Comet—Sire: NCHA Money Earner—IBHA Halter & Performance Points NRHA Money Earner—AQHA ROM Reining, IBHA 2003 Reserve World Champion Cutting, NQHA 2004 National Year End High Point Champion Novice Trail, NQHA 2004 National Year End High Point Open Reined Cutting 3rd/4th.

free, he also jumped into the back of a four-wheel drive pickup, and proceeded to let Jack crawl under him to hobble him, all with his mares calling to him from only about forty feet away. We wanted very much to buy Poco, but Troy was not interested in selling him at the time. Let me say, that experience greatly helped us to get hooked on the incredible foundation Quarter horse disposition and mind.”

In 1990, Troy Rose contacted Gail and Brent. It was time for him to retire. To acquire Poco's Gray Comet, they agreed to purchase all of Rose Ranch's breeding stock.

By that time they could already see how well this young stallion was crossing with their newly acquired band of mares. The impression that Poco's Gray Comet made on them motivated Gail and Brent to explore the foundation Quarter horse bloodlines of King and Poco Bueno, which figured so largely in his pedigree. This started their nationwide search for mares from Poco Bueno and King lines in order to cross with Poco's Gray Comet.



Jaz Ranch broodmares against the backdrop of the Eaglecap Wilderness.

Eventually they ended up with seventeen granddaughters of Poco Bueno. The mares were 100 percent National Foundation Quarter Horse and had all the Waggoner Ranch breeding. Jaz Ranch began to focus on preserving the bloodlines that they worked so hard to find, instead of just raising a few horses for themselves, which had been their original plan.

In 1992, they acquired Little Steel Dust. He was a 1974 grullo stallion by Poco King Tuck (by Poco Bueno) and out of Pretty Sparkle by Poco Light (by Poco Bueno). Jaz Ranch decided to keep Poco to breed back to Little Steel Dust's daughters once they reach breeding age.



Foals by Pocos Gray Comet out of daughters of Little Steel Dust.

Breeding Program

Gail and Brent are firm advocates of the idea that what makes a breeding program truly invaluable is the ability of the stallion(s) and mares to outproduce themselves. “The foals that we are getting are just phenomenal. Their disposition is phenomenal, and their ability to learn is even greater than the Steel Dust babies.”

The majority of Jaz Ranch’s customers are repeat buyers. Jaz Ranch has customers all across the United States, Canada, and Europe, including France, Luxembourg, and Germany. Their colts excel in National Foundation Quarter Horse Association (NFQHA) events, as well as AQHA, National Reining Horse Association (NRHA), and National Reined Cow Horse Association (NRCHA) competition.

The Jaz Ranch program in its entirety consists of five grullo stallions; two very rare bay 50 percent Poco Bueno stallions; forty-five broodmares, including twenty-two grullo; and assorted ranch horses, young horses, and retirees—all Poco Bueno bred, and all NFQHA certified. “Everybody who knows anything about Jaz ranch knows immediately what we do,” laughs Gail. “There are very specific things that they identify us with and I guess that’s part of being obsessed with a single idea.”

Jaz Ranch's primary objective remains breeding the prototypical Foundation Quarter Horse that the AQHA was originally formed to protect. They seek a minimum of 25 percent Poco Bueno bloodlines in their foals (they range from 26 to 50 percent Poco Bueno), and to be certified foundation by the National Foundation Quarter Horse Association at 95 to 100 percent, while preserving the grullo color. They raise strong working horses, with good bone and feet, versatility, color, and a wonderful, willing disposition. The foals are heavily muscled and pretty headed, and have fantastic minds and conformation.

Gail believes that after reading *Starting Baby Jaz: A Young Horse's Journey from Halter to Saddle*, everyone will see that Jaz Poco Salsa is further proof of the amazing character of these horses. "I could tell people that Charles Wilhelm picked the best of our foals, but honestly, they all share her exceptional temperament, willingness, and abilities. They are such incredible horses. I hope folks who read this book will feel free to give us a call to talk about our babies—or even your own!"



Nothing like kids and foals: Brent's grandchildren playing with foals by Poco's Gray Comet.

ABOUT CHARLES WILHELM TRAINING RANCH

Charles Wilhelm Training
6496 Crow Canyon Road
Castro Valley, CA 94552
Phone: 877-886-9001 (toll-free), 510-886-9000
Fax: 510-886-9085
www.charleswilhelm.com

This sixty-acre ranch in Castro Valley, California, is known for its picturesque setting as well as its friendliness and hospitality. The ranch is operated as a year-round training and educational forum for horse owners and enthusiasts of every level. At any given time you may find experienced trainers brushing up on their skills in the arena or on a trail, while a novice learns the basics of round pen work. Ongoing activities include training programs, lessons, horsemanship programs, apprenticeships, and clinics and other educational events.

The center has forty stalls, a 100-by-250-foot covered arena, two outdoor arenas, two round pens, large outdoor turnouts, several outdoor paddocks, and a modern bunkhouse that can accommodate up to ten. The ranch has many beautiful trails, a running stream through the property, and a wonderful view of the San Francisco Bay Area. Charles; his wife, Anne; son, Jeff; daughter-in-law, Severine; ranch manager, Karen Werth; and the rest of the staff all work together closely to make this training center the great success it is, and ensure every visitor feels welcome and receives exceptional care.

Training Programs

A limited number of horses are accepted into a rotation of full-time training slots that may last anywhere from thirty to sixty to ninety days or longer. The staff specializes in colt starting and working with what are commonly referred to as “problem horses.” The average training duration for starting or re-schooling horses is typically four to six months. Of course, this depends hugely on the training objectives as well as on the horse herself. Since Charles and his crew are quick to point out, “It’s never, ever the horse’s fault,” all horse training done at the facility comes with full lessons for the owner as well.



Charles Wilhelm Training ranch.

Horses are accepted for open training slots after lengthy discussion among the ranch staff, Charles, and the owner. All parties go through an evaluation of the horses' needs, as well as the owners', to ensure that expectations have been clearly set and there are realistic objectives.

Charles believes that extent of the horse's training is ultimately only as good as the owner/rider practice and what they are taught at Charles Wilhelm Training. Thus, the training of the horse is guaranteed to the last day of the horse's training. Once the horse leaves Charles Wilhelm Training, continued success depends on the owner/rider. To that end and to fulfill each owner's training goals, owners are required to commit to a minimum number of two monthly riding/handling lessons, and are encouraged to take advantage of weekly lessons when possible. These may be scheduled as private, semi-private, or group lessons, or may be supervised practice sessions. All horses in training or boarding must have safe ground manners that include respectful leading, tying, farrier, trailer loading, and stall manners. These are often an early training objective for horses entering the program.

To protect each client's training investment, only Charles Wilhelm Training and coaches will be allowed to school a horse (unless an exception is

written into the training contract). And all clients are encouraged against experimenting with outside advice during the term of the training since it may impede their progress and that of their horse.

Charles meets personally at least once a month with every training client to review the horse's (and owner's) progress, and to provide a complete evaluation as well as discussing next steps and goals.

Charles believes that horses have an inherent desire to perform for their handlers, but are usually confused by unclear signals or are locked into undesirable behaviors that were never corrected. "In twenty years of horse training and competition, I have concluded that there are no problem horses, only uneducated horses (and handlers)," Charles notes. "All horses are trainable; all horses are salvageable. The most enjoyable horses are those with good manners that have been patiently built through a solid training foundation. Once the foundation is established, the horse becomes a quick, willing student who is eager to learn and please. In many ways horses are just like people, with different characteristics and personalities. Each one learns at a different level and length of time; some horses learn lessons more easily than others."

Horsemanship Education

Charles Wilhelm Training proudly offers one- to three-week learning experiences for first-time and returning owners. Our exceptional program provides a sound foundation for starting colts, re-schooling, and as a remedy for behavioral or gymnastic problems—truly an essential course for all horses and disciplines, and an excellent overview of our comprehensive Ultimate Apprenticeship Program. Participants are taught the full range of tools Charles has developed to promote the best in the equine-human relationship, helping both horse and owner reach their full potential. With a maximum of two participants per session, this intimate and individualized program is personally directed by Charles Wilhelm and his expert staff. Onsite lodging is available for out-of-town guests. Here is a sample of the basic tools you will learn: round pen training, sacking out/de-spooking, and trailer loading.

Apprenticeship Program

Charles Wilhelm Training offers this exciting twelve-week certification program for owners. Based on the Ultimate Foundation Training method, it is designed to deliver the fundamental tools for success with any horse in any riding discipline. The program is divided into four units of three weeks each, given over any period of time. These units are

- Level One: Basic Ground School covers various groundwork training exercises such as round penning, leading, and sacking out philosophies and principles.
- Level Two: Ready to Ride includes in the saddle training lessons such as four direction control in hand, giving to the bit, and transitions.
- Level Three: Gaits and Aids explains more advanced in-the-saddle training lessons such as side passing, leg yields, and diagonals, teaching the lope or canter.
- Level Four: Trail Safe covers such topics as starting on the trail, problem behaviors on the trail, and chiropractic and massage therapies.

This format allows scheduling flexibility and time between units to practice and apply new skills. Each level is offered at various times throughout the year, though they must be completed in chronological order. Certificates are provided after passing each segment.

Each participant may provide up to two horses for each segment. One broke and one green is acceptable. Stabling, feed, or use of our horses is provided at an additional fee.



Charles Wilhelm Training ranch.

Clinics and Events

Our celebrated year-round clinics and special events offer something for every horse and every rider. Among these is the popular Ultimate Horse Camp for Women and the Ultimate Colt Starting Clinic.

The Ultimate Horse Camp for Women is for women who are either new to horses as adults, or are returning to them after years apart from these magnificent creatures. Ultimate Horse Camp provides women with the comprehensive foundation of knowledge and skills needed to create and maintain the relationship, performance, and attitude sought from an equine companion. Participants do not need a horse for this event, and this is an educational forum for the novice. This event books quickly each year and early reservations are suggested.

The Ultimate Colt Starting Clinic is designed specifically for those people who want to fully immerse themselves in a highly intensive workshop targeted strictly for starting a horse under saddle. Over the course of five days, Charles will work with the participants and their horses to cover topics and exercises such as safety, round penning, ground manners, and preparing for a first ride.

There are plenty of opportunities to work hands-on with the horse, and additional Charles Wilhelm Training staff are always available to ensure help is available quickly if needed. This clinic also fills rapidly since it is limited to only five participants; we suggest those interested reserve a spot early.

Dozens of clinic and demonstration topics are available. A comprehensive list of the topics Charles commonly covers at clinics and expositions is available on our Web site, www.charleswilhelm.com. Any of these subjects can also be conducted at your facility, or hosted at ours with a minimum number of participants. A current events calendar, which is updated frequently, can also be viewed online. Please keep in mind that Charles does travel nationwide; if you are interested in hosting a Charles Wilhelm clinic at your own facility, you can select from dozens of popular topics, or work with Charles to create a custom clinic perfect for your own needs.

If you are interested in purchasing any of the equipment Charles uses or training DVDs he has created, visit us online at www.charleswilhelm.com.

Index

- “aaaw” factor, young horse ownership, 2
- ability recognition, horsemanship element, 242
- adoptions, young horse ownership, 2
- age, riding fitness determination, 168–169
- aggression, food presentation, 96–99
- apprenticeship program, Charles Wilhelm Training Ranch, 299–300
- auscultation exam, PPE (pre-purchase exam) element, 265
- backing up, leading exercise, 47
- back-up cue, trailer-loading, 194–196
- balloons, Ultimate Foundation Training uses, 15
- bathing exercise
 - pressure/release application, 10
 - young horse introduction, 85–89
- behaviors, food aggression, 96–99
- bikes, Ultimate Foundation Training uses, 15
- bits
 - adjustment guidelines, 133
 - bridling exercise, 132–137
 - material types, 132, 134
 - yielding-to-the-bit exercises, 138–139
- breeders
 - desirable traits, 24–25, 257–260
 - locating, 258–260
 - PPE (pre-purchase exam), 263–268
- breeding, 24–25
- breeding programs, Jaz Ranch, 295–296
- breeds, personality traits, 27–29
- bridle-less riding exercise, techniques, 205–207
- bridling exercise, young horse introduction, 132–137
- calmness, Ultimate Foundation Training guidelines, 19
- canes, hoof-handling aid, 37–39
- change-of-direction exercise, trailer-loading, 185–189
- Charles Wilhelm Training Ranch
 - activities, 297–301
 - colt-starting techniques, 207–227
- cinches
 - desensitization exercise, 122–123
 - rope cinch exercise, 123–124
- circle exercise, saddle work foundation, 67–71
- clinics, Charles Wilhelm Training Ranch, 301
- clipper training, young horse introduction, 92–96
- colt-starting competitions, pros/cons, 170–171
- competitions
 - breeder research resource, 259
 - colt-starting, 170–171
- concentrated circle exercise, saddle work foundation, 67–71
- conditioned response, foundation training, 8–11
- conformation
 - PPE (pre-purchase exam), 265–268
 - young horse selection element, 25–26

- consistency, foundation training requirement, 7
- cowboy (rope) halter
 - line work introduction, 50–51
 - post exercise, 57–59, 61–67
 - tying exercise, 55–59
 - Ultimate Foundation Training requirement, 14–15
- creep feeding, weaning preparation, 282–283
- crossing objects demonstration, Western States Horse Expo, 199–201
- cues
 - back-up, 194–196
 - go-forward, 189–193, 201
 - leading exercise, 46–48
 - line work introduction, 51
 - trailer-loading, 181–182
- customers, breeder research resource, 259
- desensitization exercise
 - clipper training, 92–94
 - saddle blankets, 122–123
 - saddle introduction, 129–131
 - saddle work foundation, 73–75
 - shot preparation, 78–79
- de-spooking exercise
 - distractions, 120
 - movement-with-tarp, 119–120
 - plastic bags, 106–111
 - sacking-out-with-a-saddle blanket, 124–126
 - sacking-out-with-a-tarp, 115–119
 - tarp-on-a-line, 111–115
 - tarps, 102–106, 115–119
- developmental orthopedic disease (DOD), symptoms/conditions, 286
- digestive system, food processing, 277–278
- directional changes
 - de-spooking exercise, 102–104
 - leading exercise, 46–47
 - line work, 51–54
 - round pen exercises, 150–153, 156–161
- directional control
 - concentrated circle exercise, 67
 - leadership/respect building, 19–20
- disposition, horse selection element, 24–25
- distractions
 - de-spooking exercises, 120
 - horsemanship element, 242–243
 - leading exercise, 46
 - post exercise, 63
- DOD (developmental orthopedic disease), symptoms/conditions, 286
- dressage stick
 - concentrated circle pressure, 70
 - food aggression control, 97–98
 - plastic bag exercise, 106–107
 - Ultimate Foundation Training uses, 15
- ears, desensitization techniques, 73–75
- emotional level (flight instinct), young horse selection element, 25
- emotional/mental development, Ultimate Foundation Training, 12
- emotions, riding guidelines, 166
- energy, feed component, 274–275
- English saddles
 - blanket desensitization, 122–123
 - bridling exercise, 132–137
 - cinch desensitization, 122–123
 - desensitization exercise, 129–131
 - first-time reactions, 131–132
 - fitting rules, 121–122
 - hip-with-a-rope exercise, 140–141
 - pad desensitization, 122–123
 - rope-across-the-saddle exercise, 141–144
 - rope cinch exercise, 123–124
 - sacking-out-with-a-saddle blanket, 124–126
 - surcingle exercise, 126–128
- equine heel, leading position, 45–49
- equipment
 - handling comfort importance, 17
 - quality considerations, 17
 - riding safety, 170
 - round pen work, 149
 - Ultimate Foundation Training requirements, 14–18
- events, Charles Wilhelm Training Ranch, 301

- everyday activities, Ultimate Foundation Training opportunity, 18
- exercise revisiting, Ultimate Foundation Training guidelines, 18
- exercises
 - bathing, 10, 85–89
 - bridle-less riding, 205–207
 - bridling, 132–137
 - clipper training, 92–96
 - concentrated circles, 67–71
 - de-spooking, 101–120
 - earning respect, 45–49
 - excess energy workout, 83–85
 - food aggression control, 97–99
 - grooming, 41–43
 - guiding, 227–240
 - haltering, 29–33
 - handling desensitization, 73–79
 - hip control, 227–230
 - hip over, 71–73
 - hip-with-a-rope, 140–141
 - hoof handling, 36–40
 - inside turns, 152–153, 156–159
 - landings, 54–55
 - leading, 34–36, 45–49
 - line work, 49–54
 - mounting/dismounting, 171–173
 - movement-with-tarp, 119
 - outside turns, 151–152, 160–161
 - plastic bag, 106–111
 - post, 57–59, 61–67
 - rope-across-the-saddle, 141–144
 - rope cinch, 123–124
 - round pen directional change, 150–153, 156–161
 - round pen movement consistency, 154–156
 - sacking-out-with-a-saddle blanket, 124–126
 - sacking-out-with-a-tarp, 115–119
 - saddle blanket desensitization, 122–123
 - saddle desensitization, 129–131
 - shoulder control, 202, 231–235
 - stopping pre-cues, 203–204
 - surcingle, 126–128
 - tarp-on-a-line, 111–115
 - tarps, 102–106, 115–119
 - trailer-loading, 184–196
 - trailer-loading change-of-direction, 185–189
 - tying, 55–59
 - weight shifting, 173
 - yielding-to-the-bit, 138–139
- expense, young horse ownership, 2
- farriers, shoe recommendations, 254
- fear acceptance, horsemanship element, 244–245
- feeds
 - condition score chart, 288–289
 - creep feeding, 282–283
 - digestive system, 277–278
 - forage, 278–279
 - fortified concentrates, 279–280
 - futurity weanlings, 283–285
 - hand-feeding, 30
 - nutrition components, 273–276
 - overweight horse, 289
 - rules, 280–282
 - sale foals, 285
 - supplements, 280
 - underweight horse, 289–290
 - unfortified grain, 279
- fence rushing, food aggression, 96–99
- fencing, round pen height guidelines, 150
- flexion texts, PPE (pre-purchase exam) element, 267–268
- flight instinct (emotional level), young horses selection element, 25
- foals
 - creep feeding, 282–283
 - diet guidelines, 285–286
 - preventive health care, 270–272
- focus, horsemanship requirement, 242, 244
- food aggression
 - control techniques, 97–99
 - recognition signs, 96–97
- footing material, round pen, 150
- forage, feeds, 278–279
- fortified concentrates, feeds, 279–280
- foundation training. *See also* Ultimate Foundation Training; training
 - conditioned response, 8–11
 - consistency requirement, 7
 - methodology, 5
 - patience requirement, 7

- foundation training (*cont.*)
 - persistence requirement, 7
 - pressure/release application, 9–11
 - principles, 5
 - pyramid analogy, 5–6
 - setting/raising standards, 11
 - trainer tasks, 7–8
- frequency, riding fitness determination, 168
- front end, shoulder control exercise, 202
- futurity weanlings, diet guidelines, 283–295
- geldings, temperament factor, 25
- gender, temperament factor, 25
- genetic disorders, PPE (pre-purchase exam) element, 263
- genetics, personality factor, 24–25
- goal setting
 - horsemanship element, 245–246
 - Ultimate Foundation Training guidelines, 18
- go-forward cue
 - refining, 201
 - trailer-loading, 189–193
- grains, creep feeding, 282–283
- grooming, clipper training, 92–96
- grooming exercise, young horse introduction, 41–43
- ground manners, earning respect, 45–49
- ground tie, line work introduction, 51–52
- ground-tie training
 - food aggression control, 96–99
 - tarp uses, 104–106
- ground work, yielding-to-the-bit exercise, 138–139
- guiding exercises
 - hip control, 227–230
 - shoulder control, 231–235
- haltering exercise, young horse introduction, 29–33
- halters
 - line work introduction, 50–51
 - post exercise, 57–59, 61–67
 - rope versus web, 15
 - typing exercise, 55–59
 - Ultimate Foundation Training requirement, 14–15
- hand-feeding, avoiding, 30
- handlers, snubbing horse simulation, 208, 211–220
- handling, desensitization techniques, 73–79
- height/weight, riding fitness determination, 167
- helmets, riding safety equipment, 170
- hip control, guiding exercises, 227–230
- hip over exercise, saddle work foundation, 71–73
- hitching post, post exercise use, 63
- hoof handling exercise, young horse introduction, 36–40
- hooves
 - bare versus shod feet, 254
 - care importance, 253–254
 - cowboy shoeing, 254
 - handling exercise, 36–40
 - PPE (pre-purchase exam) element, 267
 - trimming timelines, 254
- horse camping, tying exercise benefit, 58–59
- horseman's cane
 - cinch aid, 126
 - concentrated circle pressure, 68
 - plastic bag exercise, 106–107
 - Ultimate Foundation Training uses, 15–16
- horsemanship
 - ability recognition, 242
 - accommodate the horse, 245
 - clear intentions, 243–244
 - distractions, avoiding, 242–243
 - fear acceptance, 244–245
 - focus requirement, 242, 244
 - goal setting, 245–246
 - mental aspects, 241–246
- horsemanship education, Charles Wilhelm Training Ranch, 299
- hyperkalemic periodic paralysis (HYPP), genetic disorder, 263
- initial cost, young horse ownership reason, 2
- inoculations, desensitization techniques, 78–79

- inside turns, round pen work, 152–153, 156–159
- Internet, breeder research tool, 258–259
- Jaz Ranch, development history, 291–295
- knees, physical fitness determination, 167–169
- knowledge, foundation training requirement, 7–8
- landing exercise, young horse introduction, 54–55
- lariats, round pen equipment, 149
- leadership
 - directional control, 19–20
 - earning respect, 45–49
- leading exercise
 - earning respect, 45–49
 - pressure/release application, 9–10
 - young horse introduction, 34–36
- lead lines (working ropes)
 - concentrated circle exercise, 67–71
 - food aggression control, 97–99
 - landing exercise, 54–55
 - round pen equipment, 149
 - tarp-on-a-line exercise, 111–115
 - Ultimate Foundation Training requirement, 15–16
- line work
 - bathing exercise, 85–89
 - excess energy workout, 83–85
- line work exercise, young horse introduction, 49–54
- lunge whip
 - food aggression control, 97–98
 - plastic bag exercise, 106–107
 - round pen equipment, 149
 - Ultimate Foundation Training uses, 15–16
- mares, hormonal issues, 25
- mental aspects, horsemanship, 241–246
- mental/emotional development,
 - Ultimate Foundation Training, 12
- mental fitness, riding guidelines, 166–167
- methodology, foundation training, 5
- minerals, feed component, 276
- molars, bit fitting, 133
- mounting blocks, safety concerns, 172
- mounting exercises
 - mounting blocks, 172
 - weight shifting, 173
 - young horse introduction, 171–173
- mouth
 - bridling exercise, 132–137
 - desensitization techniques, 73–76
- movement-with-tarp, de-spooking-exercise, 119
- Mr. Jeans, mounting exercise aid, 171, 209
- musculoskeletal system, PPE (pre-purchase exam) element, 266–267
- natural horsemanship, Ultimate Foundation Training concepts, 12–14
- nervous behavior, post exercise, 57–59, 61–67
- one-rein stop, techniques, 228
- open mind, foundation training requirement, 8
- osteochondrosis dessicans (OCD)
 - abnormal joints, 266–267
 - preventive health care, 269–270
- outside turns, round pen work, 151–152, 160–161
- overweight horses, diet guidelines, 289
- ownership
 - local versus long-distance buying, 259–260
 - pre-purchase exam elements, 263–268
 - training responsibility, 2–3
 - young horse acquisition reasons, 2
- paddocks, new horse introduction, 21–23
- pads, desensitization exercise, 122–123
- panels (fencing), round pen, 150
- patience, foundation training requirement, 7
- pauses, line work importance, 51–52
- persistence, foundation training requirement, 7
- personality
 - breeding element, 24–25
 - breed traits, 27–29

- physical attributes
 - PPE (pre-purchase exam), 263–268
 - young horse selection element, 25–26
- physical control, Ultimate Foundation Training element, 11–12
- physical fitness, riding guidelines, 167–169
- physical safety. *See also* safety
 - concentrated circle exercise concerns, 67
 - grooming exercise, 42–43
 - mounting block concerns, 172
 - riding equipment, 170
 - Ultimate Foundation Training guidelines, 18–20
- pipe panels, tie ring alternative, 55–56
- plan execution, foundation training requirement, 7–8
- plastic bags
 - de-spooking exercise, 106–111
 - Ultimate Foundation Training, uses, 15
- post exercise
 - saddle preparation, 61–67
 - young horse introduction, 57–59
- Pregnant Mare Urine (PMU), young horse ownership reason, 2
- pre-purchase exam (PPE)
 - equipment, 264
 - event description 264–268
 - facility, 264
 - location, 264
 - reasons, 263
 - timing, 264
- pressure
 - application/release methods, 9–11
 - bathing exercise application, 10
 - concentrated circle application, 68–70
 - de-spooking exercise, 102–104
 - food aggression control, 97–99
 - hip-with-a-rope exercise, 140–141
 - leading exercise application, 46–47
 - line work introduction, 51
 - plastic bag exercise, 107
 - tie ring introduction, 55–56
- preventive health care, young horses, 269–273
- principles, foundation training, 5
- protective vests, riding safety equipment, 170
- proteins, feed component, 275
- pullback behavior
 - clipper training, 92–93
 - post exercise, 57–59, 61–67
- pyramids, foundation training analogy, 5–6
- quarantine, new home introduction, 22
- radiographs, OCD (osteochondrosis) dessicans detection, 267
- rails, tie ring alternative, 56
- references, 291–301
- relocations, new home introduction, 21–24
- repetition
 - foundation training basis, 8–11
 - Ultimate Foundation Training element, 12
- rescue groups, young horse ownership reason, 2
- resources, breed/color registries, 260–262
- respect
 - earning, 45–49
 - Ultimate Foundation Training guidelines, 19–20
- respiratory system, PPE (pre-purchase exam) element, 265
- rewards, de-spooking exercise, 103
- riding
 - bridle-less, 205–207
 - colt-starting competitions, 170–171
 - colt-starting techniques, 207–227
 - emotional aspects, 166
 - events, 175–180
 - first ride guidelines, 174–175
 - mental aspects, 166–167
 - mounting/dismounting exercises, 171–173
 - movement exercises, 173–175
 - physical aspects, 167–169
 - problem corrections, 201–202
 - readiness determinations, 166–170
 - safety equipment, 170
 - shoulder control exercise, 202
 - stopping pre-cues, 203–204

- riding dummy, mounting exercise aid, 171, 209
- rope-across-the-saddle exercise, hand position simulation, 141–144
- rope cinch exercise, saddling preparation, 123–124
- rope (cowboy) halter
 - line work introduction, 50–51
 - post exercise, 57–59, 61–67
 - tying exercise, 55–59
 - Ultimate Foundation Training requirement, 14–15
- ropes
 - across-the-saddle exercise, 141–144
 - hip-with-a-rope exercise, 140–141
 - post exercise, 57–59, 61–67
 - tying exercise, 55–59
- round pen
 - bridle-less riding, 205–207
 - directional changes, 150–153, 156–161
 - equipment requirements, 149
 - footing material, 150
 - inside turns, 152–153, 156–159
 - line work uses, 49–51
 - logic concepts, 145–149
 - movement consistency exercise, 154–156
 - outside turns, 151–152, 160–161
 - panel height guidelines, 150
 - rules, 153–154
 - size guidelines, 149–150
 - training benefits, 162–164
 - weight shifting exercise, 173
- sacking out. *See* de-spooking exercise
- sacking-out-with-a-saddle blanket, de-spooking exercise, 124–126
- sacking-out-with-a-tarp, de-spooking exercise, 115–119
- Sacramento, CA, Western States Horse Expo, 197–201
- saddle blankets
 - desensitization exercise, 122–123
 - sacking-out exercise, 124–126
- saddles
 - blanket desensitization, 122–123
 - bridling exercise, 132–137
 - cinch desensitization, 122–123
 - desensitization exercise, 129–131
 - first-time reactions, 131–132
 - fitting rules, 121–122
 - hip-with-a-rope exercise, 140–141
 - pad desensitization, 122–123
 - rope-across-the-saddle exercise, 141–144
 - rope cinch exercise, 123–124
 - sacking-out-with-a-saddle blanket, 124–126
 - surcingle exercise, 126–128
- saddle work
 - concentrated circle exercise, 67–71
 - desensitization exercises, 73–79
 - hip over exercise, 71–73
 - post exercise as preparation, 61–67
- safety. *See also* physical safety
 - concentrated circle exercise concerns, 67
 - grooming exercise, 42–43
 - mounting block concerns, 172
 - riding equipment, 170
 - Ultimate Foundation Training guidelines, 18–20
- sale foals, diet guidelines, 285
- salivation, bit fitting, 134
- sand, round pen footing material, 150
- scars, PPE (pre-purchase exam) element, 267
- seat
 - bridle-less riding, 205–207
 - riding fitness determination, 167
- sedatives, trailer-loading use, 182
- separation anxiety, new home introduction avoidance, 22
- setting/raising standards, foundation training element, 11
- shots, desensitization techniques, 78–79
- shoulder control
 - front end work, 202
 - guiding exercises, 231–235
- skill development
 - foundation training requirement, 8
 - Ultimate Foundation Training requirement, 12
- snaffle bits, bridling exercise, 132–137
- snubbing horse, colt-starting techniques, 208, 211–220
- soft tissue injury, PPE (pre-purchase exam) element, 267
- stallions, training difficulty, 25

- standards, setting/raising, 11
- "starting a horse," concepts, 1
- stops
 - one-rein, 228
 - pre-cues, 203–204
- strollers, Ultimate Foundation Training uses, 15
- supplements
 - creep feeding, 282–283
 - feeds, 280
- surcingle exercise, saddle preparation, 126–128
- symmetry, PPE (pre-purchase exam) element, 267–268
- tail, desensitization techniques, 77
- tarp-on-a-line, de-spooking exercise, 111–115
- tarps
 - de-spooking exercises, 102–106, 115–119
 - Ultimate Foundation Training uses, 15
- teeth, bit fitting, 133
- temperament, gender factors, 25
- tie ring
 - post exercise, 62
 - tying exercise use, 55–59
 - Ultimate Foundation Training uses, 15–16
- trailer-loading
 - back-up cue, 194–196
 - change-of-direction exercise, 185–189
 - comfort considerations, 183–184
 - cues, 181–182
 - exercises, 184–196
 - go-forward cue, 189–193
 - scary aspects, 182–183
- trail rides, tarp-on-a-line exercise, 111–115
- trainers, breeder research resource, 259
- training. *See also* Ultimate Foundation Training; foundation training
 - breaks in, 91–92
 - improvement recognition, 83–85
 - ownership responsibility, 2–3
 - round pen benefits, 162–164
 - session guidelines, 81–82
 - year-long commitment, 3–4
- training programs, Charles Wilhelm Training Ranch, 297–299
- training stick, leading exercise, 47–48
- treats, avoiding hand-feeding, 30
- turnout time, training breaks, 91–92
- tying exercise, young horse introduction, 55–59
- Ultimate Foundation Training. *See also* training; foundation training
 - concepts, 11–12
 - equipment requirements, 14–18
 - foundation training advocacy, 5–8
 - mental/emotional development, 12
 - natural horsemanship, 12–14
 - physical control development, 11–12
 - reflections, 247–253
 - safety guidelines, 18–20
 - skill development requirement, 12
- underweight horses, diet guidelines, 289–290
- unfortified grain, feeds, 279
- usage, riding fitness determination, 168
- vaccinations, preventive health care, 271–272
- vests, riding safety equipment, 170
- veterinarians
 - pre-purchase exam, 263–268
 - riding fitness determination, 169
 - shoe recommendations, 254
- vitamins, feed component, 276
- water (bath) exercise
 - pressure/release application, 10
 - young horse introduction, 85–89
- water, nutrition importance, 276
- weaning
 - creep feeding, 282–283
 - preventive health care, 271
- web halters, versus rope (cowboy) halters, 15
- Web sites
 - breed/color registries, 260–262
 - Charles Wilhelm Training Ranch, 297
 - educational, 262
 - Jaz Ranch, 291
 - organization by discipline, 262

- weight/height, riding fitness determination, 167
- weight shifting, mounting exercise, 173
- Western saddles
 - blanket desensitization, 122–123
 - bridling exercise, 132–137
 - cinch desensitization, 122–123
 - desensitization exercise, 129–131
 - first-time reactions, 131–132
 - fitting rules, 121–122
 - hip-with-a-rope exercise, 140–141
 - pad desensitization, 122–123
 - rope-across-the-saddle exercise, 141–144
 - rope cinch exercise, 123–124
 - sacking-out-with-a-saddle blanket, 124–126
 - surcingle exercise, 126–128
- Western States Horse Expo, Sacramento, CA, 197–201
- wolf teeth, bit fitting, 133
- working ropes (lead lines)
 - concentrated circle exercise, 67–71
 - landing exercise, 54–55
 - round pen equipment, 149
 - tarp-on-a-line exercise, 111–115
 - Ultimate Foundation Training requirement, 15–16
- X-rays, physical fitness determination, 167–169
- yielding-to-the-bit, exercise guidelines, 138–139
- young horses
 - disposition determination, 24–25
 - feeding rules, 280–282
 - new home introduction, 21–24
 - PPE (pre-purchase exam), 263–268
 - preventive health care, 269–273
 - reasons for acquiring, 1–2

Photo Credits

Diana Bishop: 200

Cece Campbell: 199

Robert Dawson: 295

Kristin Dietrich, DVM: 168

Franco Federici: 177, 178

Drexel Gaw: 179, 180

Charles Hilton: 15, 16 (top left and bottom right), 17, 19, 20, 22, 27, 28, 37–40, 42, 46–49, 53, 54, 56, 59, 63–69, 71, 72, 84 (top), 89, 110–120, 123–130, 135–139, 141–144, 155–161, 163, 164, 186–189, 191–196, 204 (middle and bottom), 237 (bottom), 238 (top), 239 (bottom), 255

Heather Hulter: 6, 147, 148

Jaz Ranch: 26, 293, 294

Brent Jensen: 296

Bob Parker: 292

Karen Werth: 16 (top right and bottom left), 33–36, 74–79, 84 (bottom), 86–88, 93–99, 103–105, 108, 109, 134, 151, 152, 166, 203, 204 (top), 205–211, 213–227, 229–236, 237 (top), 238 (bottom), 239 (top left and right), 240, 298, 300

Charles Wilhelm: 23, 24